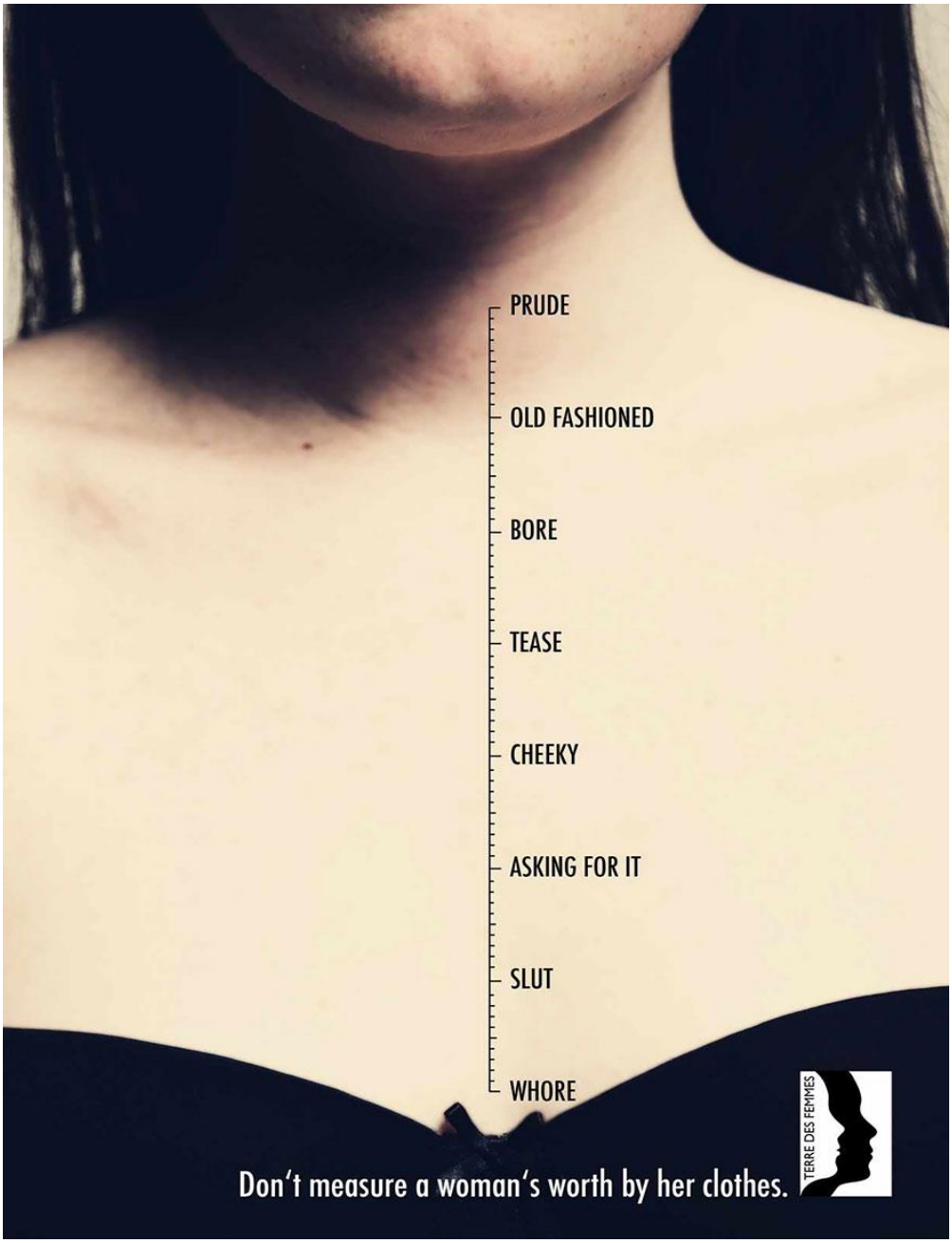
Who's Afraid of The Big Bad Wolf?



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Abstract

Fairy tales are an influential aspect within our culture. We grow up hearing and reading these stories in different mediums throughout our lives, which is why these narratives are easily identifiable. This thesis aims to connect three different versions of the fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood*, namely Charles Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood*, the Brothers Grimm's *Little Red Cap* and Paul Delarue's documentation and publishing of *The Story of Grandmother*. These narratives will act as a framework to compare two contemporary novels, namely Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which display many of the same recognisable elements as in *Little Red Riding Hood*. I have chosen these texts because they represent varying aspects of extreme forms of patriarchy and consequently its inherent hierarchal ideology.

These texts move from the 17th century and up to our current time. *Little Red Riding Hood* has been well known throughout this time, which makes the different version interesting to compare to the novels in order to study if the inherent patriarchal ideology of the Western world has remained static from when *Little Red Riding Hood* first appeared in print, in 1697, up until now, and also how a possible extreme version of patriarchy might look in the future.

Through the lens of how literature presents both sex and gender within a patriarchal structure we will discuss how the characters are confined to both their biological and socially assigned roles. Hence, this thesis aims to highlight the restrictions and regulations patriarchy places on all human beings and, consequently, condition the way we perceive others and ourselves.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> A fairy tale is different every time it is told, and takes colour and texture from the context of the telling
>
> (Warner 2012: x)

This thesis is written from a feminist point of view where Western ideology and patriarchal structures will be examined through literature. I have chosen to ground my investigation in fairy tales, with a particular focus on *Little Red Riding Hood*. Three well known versions of this tale will be read alongside two contemporary novels that are underpinned by *Little Red Riding Hood,* namely Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

I have chosen to investigate the literary traditions of *Little Red Riding Hood* as an extreme example of patriarchal suppression, which have been mediated to young girls for centuries. In order to demonstrate this I have chosen three different versions of the fairy tale, namely Charles Perrault's *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* in *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé. Avec des Moralités* (1697) (*Little Red Riding Hood*) (Perrault 1999: 11). Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Rotkäppchen* in *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* (7th ed, 1857) (*Little Red Cap*) (Grimm 1999: 13). And, Paul Delarue's *The Story of Grandmother* (1951) in *Les Contes merveilleux de Perrault et la tradition populaire*, *Bulletin folklorique de I'llede-France*, in 1951[1] (Delarue 1999: 10).

The two novels employ the fairy tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* to partly contest and partly repeat the effects of a patriarchal ideology on the lives and the minds of women. *The Lovely Bones* gives us insight into a patriarchal structure that mimics our own, while *The Handmaid's Tale* reveal what an extreme form of patriarchal ideology can look like if it stand unopposed and allowed to be developed to its fullest capacity.

[1] *The Story of Grandmother* was told by Louis and François Briffault in Nièvre, and collected and published by Paul Delarue.

1.1 Oral Fairy Tales and Tradition

Bruno Bettelheim notes that "[t]o attain to the fullest its consoling propensities, its symbolic meanings, and, most of all, its interpersonal meanings, a fairy tale should be told rather than read" (Bettelheim 1991: 150). Bettelheim also states that "[t]elling is preferable to reading because it permits greater flexibility" (Bettelheim 1991: 150). This reveals his belief that oral tales holds greater power because there is a connection between the teller and the listener and, thereby the story is given more flexibility and meaning as it is not static as in the pages of a book. Bettelheim concludes that "[t]he adult's sense of active participation in telling the story makes a vital contribution to, and greatly enriches, the child's experience of it" (Bettelheim 1991: 156). This confirms that there is a bond between the teller and the listener. The teller can perceive the reaction of the listener and consequently embellish and put emphasis on different parts in accordance with reactions, and be an active participant and further contribute to the fairy tale.

Therefore, I would argue that fairy tales, or their oral origins, folk tales, as an oral form can act as a potential liberating force that discusses and attempts to explain everyday occurrences and dangerous elements, in addition to attempting to answer existential questions that everyone encounters about life and the future. Bettelheim's view on oral tales and their tellers is developed by Marina Warner whose caption to a drawing by Tom Pouce (Paris 1825) states that:

> [t]he proverbial wise woman narrator was placed on the outskirts of the village, on the edge of the woods, and, according to the tradition of children's literature, she is very old while her listeners are young
>
> (Warner 1995: 21)

This further presses the notion that there is, unequivocally, an inherent tradition of oral fairy tales, and as Warner further emphasises, that there is a tradition of female storytellers who told these narratives. This places both female storytellers and women at the outskirts both mentally and physically in the fairy tales, in the edge of the woods, and marginalises them. Warner has made this into a political issue and expose that this places the female oral tradition in the margins and, consequently, the male literary tradition becomes the centre.

In her book *From Beast to the Blonde,* Marina Warner notes that "[t]he *traditio* does literally pass on, as the word suggests, between the generations" (Warner 1995: 17). The word

tradition, in itself, reveals that fairy tale's inherent oral tradition has made the tales move and change with time, people, tradition and culture causing their endless reinvention while securing the characteristic traits that make them easily recognisable to everyone who reads or hears them. This again evokes Bettelheim's view that tellers contribute to the story as it moves through them and onto the next teller, and that they slowly change along their path and take on a force and life on their own.

Fairy tales as an oral form are different from their literary counterparts. Oral fairy tales try to explain and reveal existential questions, such as a purpose or meaning, or to comprise what Jack Zipes refers to as some kind of ritual when he says, that:

> [t]he tales themselves assumed a generic quality based on the function that they were to fulfill for the community or the incidents that they were to report, describe, and explain. Consequently, they were tales of initiation, worship, warning, and indoctrination
>
> (Zipes 1999: 333-334)

Because of their oral form these tales a part of everyday life and consequently are about initiation, warning and indoctrination to children in order to amuse, entertain but also address important existential questions about life and the future.

1.2 Literary Fairy Tales

While the oral tales were dynamic and flexible, however, their literary versions are more static. What is more, when written down, fairy tales take on new meanings, as the likes of Charles Perrault, the brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, or, closer to home, Asbjørnsen and Moe, have all shown in their transformations of orally based folk narratives into the literary fairy tales we know and recognise today. It is also important to note that the well-known names within literary fairy tales are male. When we explore the two chosen literary fairy tales, *Little Red Riding Hood/Red Cap* by Perrault and the Grimms, moreover, we see that the symbolism changes. The tale does not depict a girl's initiation into adulthood as in oral versions, instead we are presented with a girl who missteps and is made an example of in terms of what will

happen if patriarchal rules are not followed. Thereby, the patriarchal values become the focus of these tales.

The shift from oral to literary fairy tales, and from female to male tellers, have rendered literary fairy tales to serve another purpose. In the words of Warner, fairy tales are "essentially a moralizing form, often in deep disguise" which has been set forth not only to teach children the difference between right and wrong, but also to enforce the inherent patriarchal structure that resides in the society it mirrors and represents in contrast to the oral traditions, where the tellers were mostly female (Warner 1995: 25). Thereby, literary canon of fairy tales and the likes of Perrault, has in Zipes words "transformed a hopeful oral tale about initiation of a young girl into a tragic one of violence in which the girl is blamed for her own violation" (Zipes 1993: 7). For this reason I have chosen to compare the two literary version by Perrault and the Grimms to one oral version in order to investigate the manner in which the two former enforce and represent patriarchal values, rules and regulations that are placed on women, and whether they place women as inferior, unable to take care of themselves and blame them for the violence acted upon them.

Both Perrault's and the Grimm's *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Little Red Cap* are literary versions. This means that they have already excluded a large part of the population that are familiar with the oral tales, because at the time they were published, literacy was not as widespread among the lower classes. In addition, as Jack Zipes states in "Breaking the Disney Spell", the fairy tales were written down to be read privately and that this privatisation violates the oral fairy tales communal tradition, and the availability of literature was a class based system as many at the time were illiterate, which furthered notions of elitism and separation (cf. Zipes 1999: 335). Therefore, the fairy tales are not only directed to the élite, they also supress traditional female storytellers and circulate a male written version that has other intentions than to portray ordinary life and life struggles. Perrault's and the Grimm's intentions for writing their respective versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* are to indicate to young girls the appropriate behaviour fitting their social status. Meaning that the tale of a young girl's initiation into adulthood has been lost and replaced with a cautionary tale with didactic purposes that conveys and prepares women to enter into a high-class socialite. The spreading of literacy has made these restrictive cautionary tales the norm for everyone to adhere to and follow. This is another reason why I have chosen these two literary versions, in addition to Delarue's oral inspired tale, because the literary versions target a very different audience than the oral narratives in which they were inspired by.

1.3 Fairy Tales Today

The literary canon of fairy tales has inspired and sustained a continuous stream of versions of the same fairy tales, like *Little Red Riding Hood*, which are familiar to readers and listeners alike, even though they are not identical. Fairy tales are, however, easily recognisable because they contain similar elements, such as castles, forests and faraway lands, and a journey with some kind of danger along the way. In addition, the different versions of fairy tales point towards the same story by using simple trademarks like a red hood, spindle or magical mirror, which indicate the specific story we are dealing with. What is interesting with fairy tales is that the narratives and basic plots are so familiar to us that we only require a little hint in order to figure out not only what genre we are dealing with, but also which specific fairy tale we hear, read or see.

It is, however, not solely within the traditional fairy tale genre, written or oral, that these distinct characteristics are contained. Today, fairy tales are a popular genre to adapt into different mediums and we see examples in television with series such as *Once Upon A Time* (2011-), *Beauty and the Beast* (2012-) and *Grimm* (2011-), and films such as, *The Village* (2004), *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), *Maleficent* (2014), *Into the Woods* (2014), and, more recently, *Cinderella* (2015). The series and films have partly returned to their original storytelling mode, and has yet again become oral and also visual. Nonetheless, they are based on literary versions and, consequently, emphasise patriarchal values such as marriage. As we see with the newest fairy tale rendition, Cinderella, the basic story has much remained the same. A young orphaned girl is left in the care of her wicked stepmother and her two daughters. This film adaptation portrays a love story where the Prince (Kit) and Cinderella (Ella), are happily married and in love. This version does not focus its attention on the fact that she, a beautiful young girl, marries a Prince, which is more a patriarchal plot which tells girls that beauty can get them far and tells boys that money and a high standing in society is all they need to in order to marry a beautiful girl. In their first meeting, Kit avoids telling Ella that he is the Prince and he tells her he is an apprentice at the castle, and her objective to go to the ball is to meet her friend, Kit, the apprentice. Consequently the story remains the same but the focus on which values one must abide by has somewhat changed, as the goal for Ella is not to marry the charming and rich Prince, but to pursue a relationship with the friendly

man she met in the woods. Nonetheless, the ultimate goal is still marriage, which is an important patriarchal institution. Thereby the patriarchal values are still very much present in newer retellings of fairy tales, and we see that they are based on the literary fairy tales that portray patriarchal values.

1.4 Patriarchy and Ideology

This thesis is written in order to investigate how literature, and fairy tales in particular, is enveloped in a fundamental patriarchal ideology, which aims to control its inhabitants by placing strict social rules and stereotypes, on both women and men. We are continuously surrounded by these implied underlying rules that are not necessarily given but that everyone knows and recognises. They are the rules within a society that seemingly have not been made but have evolved over time, and become imprinted in the social structure. This echoes some of Terry Eagleton points in his list of what ideology is, where he states that it is what makes the values, ideas of meanings that we all share, which is "the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life" and the ideas that we already have as member of a culture/social group, that is "a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class" (Eagleton 2007: 1). This tells us that ideology is a fundamental part in creating values and consequently, meanings and signs and that these are developed into ideas that are distinct to a social group or class.

Furthermore, Eagleton states that "[t]he most efficient oppressor is the one who persuades his underlings to love, desire and identify with his power" but that if "such dominion fails to yield its victims sufficient gratification over an extended period of time, then it is certain that they will finally revolt against it" (Eagleton 2007: xxii-xxiii). This statement describes what feminism is to patriarchy that it is, a revolt against suppression which has failed to gratify, thereby exposing the hierarchical value system that both sexes are judged by. We will in this thesis examine how these rules and values are present and presented in literature, and if literature challenge patriarchy.

The patriarchal ideological rules become connected with objectification in the way that women are viewed as inferior to men and under their control, however, as Terry Eagelton points

out, women, or any other social group considered to be inferior, must actually learn to be so, as they are not born inferior (Eagleton 2007: xxiii). This tells us that the implied rules are tools made in order to make, and teach, women to be inferior. In this thesis we will examine how these rules and, consequently, the objectification of women lead us to associate that e.g. the way a woman dresses is inherently linked to her personality, deciding whether she is promiscuous or not. In patriarchal ideology, a short skirt, high heels and a low neckline might signal that she is *easy*. This way of thinking about women also furthers notions of that some women are *asking for it* as the way they dress or behave justifies violence and rape. This is something that is suggested directly in Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood*, where Bettelheim argues that "Little Red Riding Hood makes no move to escape or fight back" concluding that, "either she is stupid or she wants to be seduced" (Bettelheim 1991: 169). Bettelheim emphasises that Perrault divides women into two categories, which are the options for the female protagonist, she is either stupid or seductive, and neither can claim to be favourable. The literary fairy tale canon of *Little Red Riding Hood* has, in Zipes' words, "become an iconic sign of the seducer, the femme fatale, who lures men and thus must beat the consequences of her heedless acts" (Zipes 1993: 8). This is to a certain extent what we see in *The Lovely Bones*, however, we do not blame the protagonist completely for what happened to her, but she blames herself and leads a search for answers of what she did wrong. Nevertheless, this is certainly emphasised in *The Handmaid's Tale*, where she has *agreed* to become a Handmaid, albeit in complete lack of another option, and her only crime or fault is that she is young and fertile.

Throughout this thesis, we will focus on how the texts reflect and/or enforce patriarchal ideology. Feminist theory is therefore an obvious framework for the thesis. The main concepts that will be discussed are essentialism, sex and gender, and, as Lois Tyson says, whether patriarchy "is based on biological differences between the sexes that are considered part of our unchanging essence as men and women" (Tyson 2006: 85). The notion of essentialism enforces sexual difference because men and women are biologically categorised as having an essence specifically linked to biology, but grounded in gender and categorised as masculine and feminine. Toril Moi notes that female and male are "purely biological aspects of sexual difference" while gender "represent *social constructs* (patterns of sexuality and behaviour imposed by cultural and social norms) (Moi 1997: 209). With essentialism, traditional gender roles follows, and sex and gender are treated as one and the same. This reveals that "*[t]raditional gender roles* cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive" (Tyson 2006: 85). This

emphasises that gender roles have developed due to essentialism and the belief that inherent biological differences define what male/masculine and female/feminine qualities are. Biological essentialism is a widespread topic among feminists because it is firmly rooted within every aspect of our society to the point that there is no other option, or other way of viewing men and women, as patriarchy enforces this notion relentlessly.

1.5 Why I have chosen *Little Red Riding Hood, The Lovely Bones* and *The Handmaid's Tale*

The main characteristics of *Little Red Riding Hood* are that of a young girl sent by her mother to bring her grandmother something to eat and drink, and on her way she meets the wolf. This is how we recognise the tale as *Little Red Riding Hood*, regardless if it is oral or written. All other well-known elements such as the red hood or cloak, the Huntsman, the picking of flowers, or the choice of two different paths, are interchangeable and vary from version to version or from each time it is told. All versions, moreover, mirror the same patriarchal frameworks, but it is only the literary, male written, versions that force patriarchal values in the storyline in order to teach the reader a lesson, as opposed to the oral retelling with a focus on explanations of events.

The two novels I have chosen to discuss in this thesis resemble oral versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* in the way that they challenge literary fairy tales' inherent patriarchal teachings. Consequently, these novels become interesting to compare with patriarchal values from a feminist perspective because they expose patriarchy at the same time as they oppose it.

Both novels resemble *Little Red Riding Hood* in storyline and portray female protagonists who encounter their respective male predators in some way and form. Nonetheless, we see here that the female protagonists are allowed to tell their own story which stands as an opposition to the norm of literary fairy tales. In addition, both novels have female authors, thereby provides a closer link back to oral fairy tales with female storytellers, as opposed to their male literary didactic counterparts. This thesis will focus on the patriarchal frameworks both novels operate within but, more importantly, how they challenge this structure by having both female narrators and authors. Sebold and Atwood reclaim the narrative back to the

tradition of female storytellers. They portray and mirror the patriarchal structure we see in *Little Red Riding Hood* and highlight and critique it for its inherent hierarchal structure.

What is interesting with the texts that have been chosen for this thesis, is that they convey three different stages of a patriarchal ideology within three different times. Even though *The Lovely Bones* is written after *The Handmaid's Tale*, we will focus on the present time within the novels and therefore address *The Handmaid's Tale* lastly as it is set in the (near) future, while *The Lovely Bones* depicts the 1970s. By doing a comparative analysis of these texts we will investigate whether the patriarchal structure and ideology have remained static. From the seventeenth century, when *Little Red Riding Hood* first appeared in print, or whether we have seen a change in the rules and regulations that young girls internalise as a part of their upbringing. Furthermore, it is within the female storytellers and authors we recognise that this structure is confronted and opposed, which signals that there is a long feminist tradition that deems patriarchal values unacceptable and undesirable.

The Lovely Bones portrays a young girl on her way home when she strays from the path and encounters a predator. As mentioned above, this basic frame is strikingly comparable to the unchangeable characteristics of *Little Red Riding Hood.* Furthermore, this line of events is given within the first chapter of the book, which furthers the notion that the story is similar to fairy tales in the way that it is a short narrative, which is contained within a few pages. In addition, the novel depicts and mirrors the patriarchal frameworks in place that we recognise from *Little Red Riding Hood,* which is a main argument throughout this thesis. *The Lovely Bones* portrays a young girl, raped and murdered by her neighbour, who narrates the story after her death, from heaven. In the novel, however, the protagonist is not silenced by her death as Red Riding Hood is as the story is allowed to continue despite her death. Nevertheless, the novel does portray an ideological patriarchal structure, as we are witness to the objectification of this young girl when she is raped and murdered, but the novel opposes this structure by allowing the female protagonist to be the narrator regardless of her situation.

This is the reason why I have chosen *The Lovely Bones*, because it retrieves the roots of traditional female storytellers and, thereby, does not limit the story to be used as a teaching tool. Rather, it explores the boundaries of patriarchy and, in doing so, exposes the fundamental suppression and silencing of women and their voices. Marina Warner writes, "The Silent Woman was an accepted ideal" (Warner 1995: 29). Therefore, I have chosen to explore how Sebold questions patriarchal values and emphasises how such a system is fundamentally flawed because of its devaluation of women and their voice.

The Handmaid's Tale also depicts a female protagonist who encounters a wolf, if not several, in a struggle to find freedom and her way back home. Furthermore, we see that the colour symbolism from *Little Red Riding Hood* with her red cloak is relevant in this novel and both protagonists, within the fairy tale and the novel, are always depicted with their respective red garments. This evokes what we previously mentioned that Zipes states that Red Riding Hood is the seducing the Wolf and viewed as a "sex object" and consequently is blamed for her rape (Zipes 1993: 8). Because the symbolism leaves us with correlation between these two protagonists, we also assimilate the values and lesson from the fairy tale into the novel. With *The Handmaid's Tale* dystopian scenario we are also presented with similar patriarchal ideology as there is in *Little Red Riding Hood*. However, in the fictive new Republic of Gilead it is an extreme version that depicts a rigid frame where women have been supressed purely based on their biological abilities. *The Handmaid's Tale* is a reactionary novel that leaves us with a scenario of a possible outcome if the patriarchal structure, which we see in both *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Lovely Bones* is allowed to grow unhindered and what the outcome will be if such values become prosperous.

In *The Handmaid's Tale* the female protagonist has become bound and subjugated by the extreme patriarchal hierarchy and consequently been silenced and rendered powerless to improve her situation. Nonetheless, within these rigid patriarchal boundaries we are presented with a female narrator who have managed, despite attempts to enforce the value that *silence is golden*, to convey her story in her own words. Again, this novel has retrieved the notion of traditional female storytellers as we read the protagonist's story in retrospect, nearly 200 years after the fact. Atwood has focused her novel in an extreme right wing Christian fundamental ideology that emphasises the sovereign male power structure a patriarchy can achieve if it enforces its hierarchy and value system to its fullest extent. I have chosen *The Handmaid's Tale* because it exposes patriarchy at its utmost powerful, at the same time as it reclaims the traditional female storyteller. Atwood further presses the notion, however, that women, their stories and retellings of events are still seen as what Warner refers to as an "old wives' tale" which "means a piece of nonsense" (Warner 1995: 19). This becomes clearer in the epilogue, where Atwood depicts another future scenario where the story is discussed and its validity and truth is questioned and mocked in which Atwood further highlights that the way women as storytellers, and consequently traditional oral fairy tales are discredited and seen as an old wives' tales and are not to be taken seriously.

Biological essentialism will be vital in this thesis as it divulge that:

> [p]atriarchy is […] by definition, *sexist*, which means it promotes the belief that women are innately inferior to men. […] it is based on biological differences between the sexes that are considered part of our unchanging essence as men and women
>
> (Tyson 2006: 85)

Through this thesis we will investigate how biological essentialism is exposed through literature and if this notion of an inherent inferiority has remained static or changed.

Chapter 2: Literary Review

> [T]here is no pure feminist or female space from which we can speak. All ideas, including feminist ones, are in the sense 'contaminated' by patriarchal ideology […] The point is not the origins of an idea (no provenance is pure), but the use to which it is put and the effects it can produce
>
> (Moi 1997: 205)

2.1 Introduction

Fairy tales are recognised and, in some form, known throughout the world, both in oral and literary form. They are a diverse genre as Andrew Teverson explains in *Fairy Tale*, saying that the fairy tale is "[…] rich in potential meanings, and can take on diverse significances depending on how it is being used and by whom" (Teverson 2013: 6). This reveals that the fairy tale is a collective force that displays many uses, depending on author, reader, listener and teller, who all contribute and input meaning to the story.

Fairy tales have held people's interest for hundreds of years. To determine their origin, however, proves difficult because they have their origins in an oral tradition, which is long, but mostly undocumented. To determine their origin is less relevant within this thesis than analysing and comparing the wide variety of different versions each fairy tale comes in, however. We will, as mentioned, look at one well-known fairy tale in particular, namely *Little Red Riding Hood* and examine patriarchy within the different versions of the fairy tale and investigate if the oral and literary portray different extremes of a patriarchal structure or if they remain the same.

Little Red Riding Hood, or versions of it, have been read in a number of different ways. From a psychoanalytically position, as Bruno Bettelheim and Andrew Teverson, from a gender and feminist perspective, as Susan Brownmiller and Marina Warner, or more of a folkloric outlook, as Jack Zipes and Paul Delarue, and it is within these approaches the main focus in

this thesis will lie (Tatar 1999: 3-9). This is also along the lines of how we will approach *The Lovely Bones*, however, not much have been written, therefore, we will treat this novel from the same perspective as *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Bettelheim argues that fairy tales "[…] should be viewed as symbolic renderings of crucial life experiences" (Bettelheim 1991: 179). This reveals that fairy tales, at least oral retellings, as mentioned previously, mainly centre around life experiences that are life altering or radically changes someone's identity. The versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* and the two chosen novels, that will be dealt with here, all centre on ordinary people who go through a life altering event, which coincide with how Bettelheim views fairy tales. Bettelheim does, however, take this one step further and asks us to not read fairy tales literally, but use the symbols provided in the story (Bettelheim 1991: 179). Therefore, readers within particular historical time periods are left with providing meaning to the story themselves and to input life experiences, associations and prominent theory from their own time. With this in mind the different readings in themselves become interesting, as readings eventually reveal something about the reader and not necessarily, solely, the writer and it becomes a collaboration between the two.

Teverson explains, as mentioned earlier, that different readings of fairy tales can be achieved depending on both who reads them and who writes them (Teverson 2013: 6). This furthers the collaboration that exists between the reader and writer. Bettelheim and Teverson share some views here. Bettelheim's approach is that the reader of fairy tales should not explain symbolism to the listening children because that would result in the reader forcing a set interpretation on the child and not letting the child learn or understand the story (maybe subconsciously) on his or her own. Bettelheim's view on this is that explanations make fairy tales into cautionary tales with didactic purposes and do not enrich the child's mind (Bettelheim 1991: 154). Teverson's approach is similar in the way that he says that fairy tales are in danger of theorists using fairy tales and forcing them into an interpretation giving the story a didactic purpose and informing the reader of the true meaning of the fairy tale (Teverson 2013: 6-7). Teverson and Bettelheim agree here that to force an interpretation or meaning is not in anyone's best interest.

What Teverson and Bettelheim have emphasised is the inherent tradition of literary fairy tales being used as cautionary tales. Tales that function as warnings to those who read them about the proper way to behave within the given patriarchal structure as opposed to symbolic tales of the imagination that signals children's worries and fears, and addresses them through

fairy tales. To use these fairy tales as didactic tools increases the patriarchal notion of biological essentialism and that there is an inherent masculinity and femininity linked to men/boys and women/girls, which in turn not attributes these narratives with gender didactic purposes. This is why I have chosen two patriarchal versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* as they represent cautionary tales with gender didactic purposes as opposed to *The Story of Grandmother,* which depicts a young girl's initiation into adulthood and explains existential questions about her future. The two novels *The Lovely Bones* and *The Handmaid's Tale* both challenge the literary fairy tales version we all know in a fundamental way. I mentioned in the introduction that they both have female authors, which places them within a long line of female storytellers and reclaims the narrative back to symbolic tales that are meant to enrich the imagination and broaden our world view.

This is why I have chosen to read the texts from a feminist and psychoanalytical perspective. Because the leap from symbolic to cautionary tale has shifted the focus of fairy tales and has become a tool to uphold patriarchy and its gender hierarchy.

2.2 Fairy Tales and Gender/Patriarchy

As has been noted above, *Little Red Riding Hood* belongs to a long oral tradition that stretches further back than its best-known literary versions from Perrault and the Grimms. Bettelheim notes that there are many elements from *Little Red Riding Hood* going far back in time. The myth of Cronos where he swallows his children, which are replaced by heavy stones and there is a Latin story from 1023 where a little girl, dressed in red, is found amongst wolves (Bettelheim 1991: 168). This reveals the long tradition this fairy tale can point to which is still very much relevant today. Not only because of its long tradition, but because it still addresses fears, concerns, and potential dangers that face children as well as adults.

Little Red Riding Hood, with its longstanding legacy, has portrayed an endless array of different outcomes, some of the narratives have happy endings while others do not. There is a belief that happy endings are mostly to be found in the oral folk tale narratives, and Zipes notes that "folk tales with a happy ending are more prevalent in the oral tradition, whereas tragic and abrupt endings tend to stem from literature" (Zipes 1993: 4). Teverson agrees with this point

and says that "the happy ending […] found in most oral variations of the story except those directly based upon Perrault" (Teverson 2013: 3). Thereby, Zipes and Teverson link tragic and unhappy endings to literary narratives, and especially Perrault's version, where the Wolf eats both Red Riding Hood and her grandmother and the story abruptly ends with that (Perrault 1999: 11-16). In the version of the Brothers Grimm, on the other hand, Red Cap and her grandmother are also eaten by the Wolf, but there is a hunter that happens to pass by and he rescues them by cutting open the Wolf's belly (Grimm 1999: 11-16).

One of Marina Warner's main concerns is the way sex and gender are portrayed in fairy tales and she claims that these narratives contribute to the way gender is viewed and that "[p]rejudices against women […] belong in the history of fairy tale[s]" (Warner 1995: xx). Fairy tales are present throughout childhood and function as entertaining stories, but they also carry underlying messages of values and virtues that stem from patriarchy, and are meant to teach us these implicit patriarchal rules and virtues. These views are limiting, however, to the extent that they also create a divide between male/female and masculine/feminine traits. This furthers the notion that we have previously mentioned, that fairy tales are developed as tools to moralise and socialise as stated by Warner in *From the Beast to the Blonde* (Warner 1995: 14). This indicates to us that Warner considers fairy tales to hold great power in rearing young minds. Therefore, the gender roles that are portrayed in fairy tales will resonate throughout society and the minds that read them. What we can draw from this is that fairy tales are narratives that are meant as tools to explore the world and in some way teach the reader, or listener, about life and the given time period it is written and read. In the words of Bettelheim, fairy tales explain:

> that a struggle against severe difficulties in life is unavoidable, is an intrinsic part of human existence – but that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious
>
> (Bettelheim 1991: 8)

This evokes what we discussed above, that fairy tales inherently reveal existential questions that both children and adults alike encounter and that explanation, with the outcome of understanding, is the main purpose of oral narratives.

If we look at fairy tales as a socialising instrument, as Warner does, it becomes important to consider gender roles and the structures that make them and maintain them. This is because society has rules and regulations concerning both correct and incorrect behaviour in social settings that not only influences, but also shapes, the way we think about each other and about

ourselves. It is also here that we see that there is a link between gender roles and the socialising aspect in fairy tales. The patriarchal rules in fairy tales, which dictate who is the saviour and who is the saved, are implemented on both sexes through gender roles.

Warner explains that women are placed into certain roles, such as those of obedience, silence, youth and beauty, and if a woman falls in between these characteristics she becomes something else (cf. Warner 1995: 43-44). This "something else" means that she becomes disobedient, unruly and "the quick, ready-to-hand expression of this undesirable lack of compliance – was the appearance of physical decay. Decrepitude enciphered ugliness, ugliness unloveliness, unloveliness unwomanliness, unwomanliness infertility: a state of being against nature" (Warner 1995: 44). There is an extreme emphasis on silence, youth and beauty as female virtues, and to be outspoken, witty or old render women within fairy tales as an old crone, the evil stepmother or, in the worst cases, unnatural *unwomen*. This emphasises that if woman does not place herself within the approved patriarchal virtues, patriarchy will consequently attempt to strip her of both her biological title as female and gender aspect as feminine and become inhuman, unwoman. Warner explains that these desirable virtues are closely linked together and lie "at the heart of the public male quest for a desirable match" (Warner 1995: 44). Which means that obedience, silence and beauty are virtues made by men and placed on women in order for the former to secure a fitting mate. It is society that has made and placed these female characteristics on women and therefore in the same process shaped an ideal that is not only difficult to adhere to, but also undesirable to fit into.

It should be noted, however, that there are also specific traits that male characters have to fit into, such as charm, authority and strength, which may be equally undesirable for men to conform to. Therefore, both sexes are placed into stereotypical roles that are partly unattainable and undesirable as a package and, more importantly, bind identity to sex and gender. We can argue that this is a product of a patriarchal structure where we are divided into categories and provided with certain characteristics to uphold order within the patriarchal system. These character traits are emphasised to an extreme degree in fairy tales, where female characters are dealt three roles, that is, young, fair beautiful maiden, mother, or old crone, (evil stepmother), while the male characters are charming princes, ruggedly handsome huntsman (or some other kind of saviour) or the evil wolf, predator. All these characters represent extreme versions of gender roles within a patriarchy.

This correlates with what Bulgarian-French theorist Julia Kristeva who believes that "[p]atriarchy defines and controls the way we relate to sex (female) and gender (feminine) as if

they were the same thing" (Tyson 2006: 103). This means that it is society, or as rather, patriarchy, that dictates the roles assigned to the sexes. The problem that both Warner and Kristeva discuss is that society does not distinguish between male/female and masculine/feminine, and that the latter are labels that male and female human beings need to identify with and behave according to. There is no distinction between biological and gender differences.

In an essay on feminist theory, Toril Moi concerns herself with the difficulties in defining concepts such as feminist, female and feminine. She suggests that *feminism* is a political position, *female* is biological, and that *feminine* is portrayed as the ideological belief in a given female nature, which she calls essentialism (Moi 1997: 204-209). This evokes Kristeva's critique of essentialism, which says that:

> any theory that *essentializes* women (that is, that posits essential – inborn, biological – characteristics for women) misrepresents their infinite diversity and leaves them vulnerable to the patriarchal essentialization of women as naturally submissive, overly emotional, and so forth
>
> (Tyson 2006: 102-103)

Similar ideas can be found in the work of Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, who also protest against "the fixed, that which cannot be overturned, or transformed" (Ives 2013: 77). Again, we see a problemaitsation of the underlying patriarchal structures that are firmly imbedded into our thoughts and actions to a point where they become impossible to overturn. In addition, Cixous and Clément focuses on what they call patriarchal binary thought, which is revealed "[t]hrough dual, hierarchal oppositions […] And all of these pairs of oppositions are *couples*" (Cixous and Clément 2008: 64). The "[m]ale privilege" is shown "in the opposition between *activity* and *passivity*" where the male is linked to activity and "woman is always associated with passivity" (Cixous and Clément 2008: 64). This furthers the notion that there are certain ideas, rules and values, which are declared within these sets of binaries, which have proven to be difficult, if not impossible, to revers or nullify. This is what we see in fairy tales where these binaries, which are presented through gender roles, where one is always presented as superior and the other inferior. These binaries have persisted within literature and we encounter them within the texts we will discuss in this thesis. All three main chapters in this thesis will aim to prove that underlying structures, essentialism and patriarchal binary thought,

and, consequently, the implicit rules that follow, are still firmly fixed, and we will explore these rigid structures in both century old fairy tales and contemporary novels.

The inherent stereotypical roles for women (and, although to a lesser degree, men) are, as we have mentioned earlier, very common in fairy tales, and Zipes states that:

> Perrault fixed the ground rules and sexual regulations […] and these were extended by the Brothers Grimm and largely accepted by most writers and storytellers in the Western world
>
> (Zipes 1993: 7)

This reveals that literature carries, and also sets a standard for ideology, which, in turn, fixes the ground rules in said ideology. Therefore, the rules that are set for Red Riding Hood to follow, consequently apply to all girls and enforce the rules and values within a patriarchal ideology.

2.3 Ideology/Patriarchy

As signalled above, ideology is also an important concept in this thesis, but one that is both challenging to explain and difficult to pin down. This is because, as stated by Terry Eagleton:

> 'ideology' has a whole range of useful meanings, not all of which are compatible with each other. To try to compress this wealth of meaning into a single comprehensive definition would thus be unhelpful even if it were possible
>
> (Eagleton 2007: 1)

Nonetheless, ideologies originate in ideas combined with cultural processes and collective thoughts and impulses. It is within these cultural collective thoughts that we see that there are certain implied rules that emerge. Ideology combines both social interest with governing political structures. For the purpose of this thesis, this is interesting when both the fairy tales and the novels are concerned because they mirror and challenge our perceptions of ourselves as well as current society, culture and ideological frameworks as a whole.

The patriarchal structure is as much a part of literature as it is a part of the ideology within a given society. Literature partly functions as a mirror to the period in which it is written, thereby, it is a product of its surroundings and therefore the link between contemporary novels and older fairy tales are interesting in the way they portray patriarchy. Patriarchy can be defined as "[a] system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions" furthermore, it is "a sex-gender system and a system of economic discrimination" (Humm 1995: 200). This definition leaves us with a clear image of female oppression and male dominance without any exceptions. It is a set system that dominates every aspect of society, whether it is social, political, economical, or philosophical. Another definition of patriarchy, from the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* says that a patriarchy is "a society, system or country that is ruled of controlled by men" (OALD 2010: 1110). The *Oxford Dictionary* does not mention "oppression" or "discrimination" which also means that it fails to take women into account and just focuses on men. Humm's definition, in contrast, is written from a feminist perspective, which means that it takes women's experience of patriarchy through the use of words such as "oppression" and "discrimination". This evokes what we discussed earlier, which is both that we are defined by the categories of sex/gender, and that women are not taken into account as long as something is not specifically dealing with feminist issues.

Essentialism is a hierarchy based system that utilises this sex/gender categorisation. Moi writes it is the interest of such a system to make us believe that there is a feminine essence of all females (Moi 1997: 209). This furthers the notion that essentialism is a patriarchal construct and a feminist perspective is to deconstruct these notions of the essence of femininity, since they serve to oppress women because of their inherent femininity, which is always linked to the inferior.

Simone de Beauvoir argues that in a patriarchy men are considered *essential subjects*, which means independent selves with free will, while women are considered *contingent beings*, which means dependent beings controlled by circumstances (cf. Tyson 2006: 96). This evokes Humm's definition of a patriarchal society which states that women are supressed and marginalised, which again evokes Cixous' and Clément's thoughts on binaries which makes women (or the female) inferior to men (or the male), and Kristeva's arguments that essentialism has forced women into a fixed gender role because there are certain feminine aspects that are considered to be in their nature.

French feminist Luce Irigaray furthermore states that "[…] patriarchal economy prefers to render female sexuality in terms of motherhood, or compulsory heterosexuality. It supports the patriarchal/masculine status quo" (qtd in Ives 2013: 100). Here we are once again presented with the idea of woman which isolated to one state of being, that is motherhood or at least heterosexuality. Furthermore, Irigaray's statement points out that women who are not mothers, or not heterosexual, become marginalised and rendered unnatural. The patriarchal structure is dependent upon women being heterosexual and, as a result of that, having children.

Interestingly, a similar structure is presented in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Here the patriarchal structure is built upon the values that mothers are the most revered in society, however, they are at the same time provided with a restrictive sense of motherhood. The, to be, mothers in *The Handmaid's Tale* are imprisoned by their fertility. This brings us back to Kristeva's views on patriarchy, which is that there is no distinction between sex and gender. This is evident in *The Handmaid's Tale* where their biology, their ability to be mothers, are restricting their roles in society and imprison them. It is, therefore, society's standards of gender roles that dictate who can be considered leaders or placed in powerful positions at the same time as society's views determine our identities and tell us who we are.

The Handmaid's Tale have been read from ideological and feminist perspectives with a strong emphasis on body, control, and patriarchy (cf. Davies 2008:58-70) (cf. Howells 2008:161-173). The main criticisms of Atwood's work, and *The Handmaid's Tale*, is that of a female voice, that has, despite of patriarchal suppression endured and depicted women from a personal and self-proclamation point of view. This is within the position of what this thesis aims to address and discuss further.

Toril Moi states that feminism is a political label which, "indicate[s] support for the aims of the new women's movement" (Moi 1997: 204). Furthermore, she says that feminism is "a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism" (Moi 1997: 204). Therefore, we must incorporate both sexes within the struggle against patriarchy, because feminism is a struggle against essentialism, against suppression, against gender roles and to achieve equality it is not enough for one-half of the population to work towards this goal and it would benefit both sexes if men and women were freed from restrictive ideas of sex and gender.

Within the next chapters of this thesis, we will aim to draw attention to patriarchal ideology and structures that confine and essentialise women and men through literature, and consequently, define human beings through a fixed ideology.

Chapter 3: Cautionary Tales and Consolatory Tales: *Little Red Cap/Riding Hood* and *The Story of Grandmother*

> [N]ice girls ought not to listen to all sorts of people. If they do, it is not surprising that the wolf will get them and eat them up
>
> (Bettelheim 1991: 168)

3.1 Introduction

Marina Warner starts with defining a fairy tale and explains that it "is a short narrative, sometimes less than a single page, sometimes running to many more" and that they are "familiar stories, either verifiably old because they have been passed down from generations or because the listener or reader is struck by their familiar resemblance to another story" (Warner 2014: xvi). Fairy tales are the stories we grow up hearing as they circulate all around us in different mediums. Fairy tales have a major cultural impact because of their fundamental place within our society. We hear and read them from childhood and into adulthood, and we also experience them and their familiarity through novels, television and film. This signals the imprint that fairy tales make as they have consumed every aspect of popular culture. Fairy tales derive from ordinary people, everyday lives and situations, as they seemingly start with a simple task or event, but they also depict hope in desperate and gruesome situations, in the form of events that most of us have to experience and live through at some point (cf. Warner 2014: 96).

The tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* also varies, and she herself varies as many times as the story is told, yet she is always recognisable and does more or less the same things. She is always described as having a favourable appearance and she always encounters a Wolf in the woods. As Jack Zipes explains in *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood,* however, sometimes she is "spoiled, gullible […] helpless" and dim-witted about the severity of the situation, while at other times she is described as trying to seduce the Wolf and

"subconsciously contribute[s] to her own rape" (Zipes 1993: 26-27). Sometimes she needs saving while other times she saves herself. In all versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, moreover, we are familiar with the task that the seemingly ordinary girl sets out to fulfil, which quickly takes a turn for the worse. Red Riding Hood's mother sends her daughter to bring food and drink for her Grandmother and to get there, Red Riding Hood has to journey through the woods. As soon as she enters the woods, she encounters the danger element in the story, namely, the Wolf.

One aspect *Little Red Riding Hood* has in common with other fairy tales is that the protagonist receives specific instructions about what to do, both implied by society at large, and/or clearly spoken by an adult. These instructions will be the main emphasis in this chapter, because it is the argument of the present theories that they shape our views of women and the breaking of any rules is often linked to connotations of being improper, unladylike, promiscuous, slutish or whorish which in turn justifies subjugation, violence and rape and leaves the question; who is to blame? Furthermore, we will discuss how fairy tales act as a teaching tool and illustrate that if one misbehaves, the blame lies with the victim because the rules have been given, but not followed.

3.2 Literary Cautionary Tales as Opposed to Oral Consolatory/Symbolic Tales

In literary tradition *Little Red Riding Hood* frequently has been used as a cautionary tale, especially for young girls. It is meant to inform about the dangers of misbehaving or not following the set rules and regulations provided both within the fairy tale and the society in which Red Riding Hood finds herself (cf. Zipes 1993: 17). Cautionary tales are short narratives which, in the words of Maria Tatar, "aim to mold behaviour by illustrating in elaborate detail the dire consequences of deviant conduct" (qtd in Teverson 2013: 145).

As a contrast, we find consolatory tales, or fables, which "[…] typically offer hope of release from poverty, maltreatment, and subjection. A happy ending is one of their generic markers" (Warner 2014: xxii). These definitions of a cautionary and consolatory tale become relevant when discussing *Little Red Riding Hood* because they expose the main difference between written and spoken tales. As will be demonstrated here, literary traditions has made a point of writing fairy tales for didactic purposes, while oral versions are hopeful and portray

happy endings. Therefore, we will explore the differences and draw attention to the contrasting outcomes in literary versions as opposed to oral versions.

By conducting a comparative analysis of three different version of *Little Red Riding Hood*, in chronological order, we will examine the message fairy tales convey and how literary narratives have changed the traditional oral tales in order to provide the readers with a cautionary tale that require them to adhere to a given standard. As opposed to a consolatory, symbolic tale that mirror different views on, and of society, and aims to tell the reader how to come to terms with serious life events.

3.3 Oral Tales and Literary Tales

Oral tales, Marina Warner notes in *From the Beast to the Blonde*, are characterised by a predominant pattern which:

> reveals older women of lower status handing on the material to younger people, who include boys, sometime, if not often, of higher position and expectations, like future ethnographers and writers of tales
>
> (Warner 1995: 17)

This reveals the inherent communal tradition of female storytellers who related fairy tales to young boys who grew up with these tales, and, in turn, became preoccupied with writing them down. To incorporate these tales in the literary canon essentially legitimises them, and provides them with a sense of importance. Consequently, the oral versions told by women, reveal an ambiguous notion as "an old wives' tale" which "means a piece of nonsense, a tissue of error, an ancient act of deception, of self and others" (Warner 1995: 19). This phrase expose views and perceptions society had, and has, of women, which express that women speak nonsense and are consequently defined as untrustworthy and/or deceptive while male authors set the standard for legitimate fairy tales, which in turn silence female storytellers and renders the stories as nonsense and simply old wives' tales. This echoes Luce Irigaray, which notes, "women's subjugation occurs in the form of psychological repression enacted through the medium of language" (Tyson 2006: 101). This tells us that language, words and phrases such

as old wives' tales are inherently the language of patriarchy, which by its use oppresses women. Irigaray further states that one option for women is "to keep quiet (for anything a woman says, that does not fit within the logic of patriarchy will be seen as incomprehensible, meaningless)" (Tyson 2006: 101). This in turn emphasises what Warner stated that silence is a fundamental patriarchal value, which we discussed in chapter 2, and that there is no medium, not even the oral tradition of female storytellers, that is viewed as important and legitimate, because women are essentialised as not having these virtues.

The literary narratives of Perrault and the Grimms change from the communal state that oral tales had. Zipes states that:

> the literary tale was written down to be read in private […] This privatization violated the communal aspect of the folk tale, but the very printing of a fairy tale was already a violation since it was based on separation of social classes
>
> (Zipes 1999: 335)

This signals that literary fairy tales mainly had an audience with the élite and, also, with adults, which reveals that literary fairy tales were teaching tools aimed at the literate upper class and meant as tools for adults to use to teach their children.

In this chapter, we will start out with a version of *Little Red Riding Hood* written by Charles Perrault in 1697 (Perrault 1999: 11-13)[2]. I have included Perrault's version because it is considered the first literary version and has therefore influenced many rewritings of the tale. With this in mind, we see why the unflattering view of women remains similar in later version written by others, because the primary basis does not present a forgiving view on women, as Perrault's focus is that of a cautionary tale which aims to teach proper conduct to young girls. Therefore, he kills Red Riding Hood in order to make an example of her and expose the consequences of what will happen when young girls do not behave properly. The second version comes from the Brothers Grimm, in 1812, which they named *Little Red Cap* (Grimm 1999: 13-16). This version is still very similar to Perrault's tale, however, Red Cap is eaten but not killed as the Huntsman saves her, and she is, given a second chance to redeem herself, which provides the reader with a notion that it is possible to learn from one's mistakes. The last version we will discuss in this chapter is claimed by French folklorist Paul Delarue to be closest to an authentic folk narrative, namely *The Story of Grandmother*, orally told to Delarue who

[2]In order to keep the versions discussed here separate, the name given by the author will be used to point to the version being discussed at that time.

published it in 1885 (Delarue 1999: 3, 10-11). It was recorded almost two centuries later than Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood*, and after the Brothers Grimm, in 1812. This story claims to be closer to oral versions as Delarue is not the author of the tale and incorporates signs from that tradition in e.g that the female character is not restricted to act as example of the consequences that might occur because of erroneous behaviour. Therefore, the tale is not meant to be a cautionary tale and has the ability and opportunity to present a happy ending, which correlates with oral traditions, where the female protagonist is able to save herself and not rely on others. This is the reason why Delarue's story is interesting to compare to the both Perrault's and the Grimm's version since it portrays different elements, and opposes the strict virtues that we see in the literary counterparts.

3.4 Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood*

Perrault presents a cautionary tale about a young, pretty village girl who is exposed to a potentially dangerous situation. The moral and meaning of this story lies in the way that Red Riding Hood handles this perilous situation and because of the tragic ending of the tale combined with the cautionary aspect we know that Red Riding Hood has misbehaved, which is why she must die and make the example. As mentioned above, literary tales portray tragic scenarios, something that is suggested by Jack Zipes who says that "tragic and abrupt endings tend to stem from literature" (Zipes 1993: 4). This coincides with Perrault's version as a cautionary tale, which aims to illustrate the consequences of misbehaving.

Perrault shifted the focus from the traditional oral happy ending and his main objective is to expose how young women must behave according to the patriarchal structure. Zipes notes that:

> "Perrault composed his narratives to set standards and models of refined virtuous behaviour for the children of his time. More precisely, he was interested in contributing to the prevalent discourse on *civilité* through the fairy tale"
>
> (Zipes 1993: 28)

Perrault does this by focusing on Red Riding Hood breaking civilised implicit patriarchal rules that every girl and woman must learn and know, which here are to never stray from the path and not to talk to strangers.

What is interesting with Perrault's version is that these implicit patriarchal rules, essentially make it impossible for Red Riding Hood to save herself, or even be saved by others. Zipes notes that "the tales […] perpetuated strong notions of male dominance" (Zipes 1993: 30). Red Riding Hood is not deemed worthy of being saved, because she is female and has not conformed to the patriarchal structure. She is, and remains, completely helpless. Consequently, there cannot be a happy ending and Red Riding Hood is simply eaten by the Wolf and dies. According to Zipes, Perrault in this manner "[…] has violated the oral tradition by distorting […] female perspective" (Zipes 1993: 4). The female perspective that Zipes claims that Perrault have distorted is that the female protagonists in the cautionary tales have been bereaved of the chance to act as their own saviour as they are believed to be incapable of such heroic acts, and they have been bound by the patriarchal essence of cautionary tales. This again, reveals that there is a significant change from oral to written when the female protagonist is concerned. Red Riding Hood is longer is capable of playing a vital role and save herself from the Wolf as she traditionally did in oral versions. Perrault has distorted female perspective by changing the ending and by rendering Red Riding Hood a defenceless, naïve, dim-witted girl who is to blame for her own undoing, instead of giving us an initiation tale about a young girl growing into adulthood (cf. Zipes 1993: 7).

Perrault has left Red Riding Hood forsaken and incapable of improving or changing her situation. Because of her gender, it seems, she can never be able to act as her own saviour, which had been the norm in oral versions. This follows what Toril Moi says about essentialism, which states that there is an inherent "belief in a given female nature" (Moi 1997: 209). What Perrault consequently tells us is that he is not interested in portraying a strong and independent girl who is capable of handling this situation on her own, because his intention is to reinforce essentialism. In this tale, Perrault aims to prove that the female is inferior to the male Wolf and powerless in any situation as long as she does not abide to patriarchal virtues. Therefore, Perrault has placed severe boundaries on Red Riding Hood.

It is important to note that the intended audience for this tale was the upper educated classes. Perrault's portrayal is a more general interpretation about power and seduction, which was more suitable to the upper classes than the oral tales' portrayal of a self-reliant young peasant girl (cf. Zipes 1993: 25, 27). Zipes further notes that Perrault wrote for both adults and

children alike. The adult readers could relish in the seductive and erotic nature of the narrative, which was lost on younger readers but who still could "enjoy the warning" in the moral of the tale (Zipes 1993: 25). With this in mind, the way Perrault represents young girls to the upper classes leads us to assume that he did not think highly of women and that there were certain expectations about how girls, or women, from the upper classes should behave. Zipes explains that "[…] Perrault's Little Red Riding Hood is pretty, spoiled, gullible, and helpless. The moral of the tale does nothing to alter her character or to suggest what would improve her character" (Zipes 1993: 26). From this we might assume that Zipes believes that Perrault viewed upper class girls as spoiled, gullible and helpless. The focus Perrault has is that high-class girls are weak and defenceless and, consequently, in his version of this fairy tale, Red Riding Hood's only chance of surviving is to conform 100% to the virtues that govern young girls' behaviour. This stands in contrast to the oral versions where the protagonist has to fend for herself in order to survive and stands as her own saviour, but this could not be revealed to the upper classes as it was deemed inappropriate behaviour.

3.4.1 Red Leads to Rape

Interestingly Perrault has also added another element, apart from the tragic ending, namely, the colour red. The emphasis on the colour is clear already from the title, which indicates to us that the colour is saturated in hidden meaning and is an important aspect of the tale. The colour red plays an important role as it, first and foremost, signals danger to us as readers, and therefore might imply that something unpleasant will happen to this girl. Secondly, it also implies that Red Riding Hood herself is dangerous, as she is the one wearing the colour. It signals her coming of age and turning into a woman, referring to menstrual blood at the same time as womanhood is accompanied with the power of seduction and sexuality.

Zipes also believes that Perrault's version leads us to read into the story that Red Riding Hood was responsible for her own rape (cf. Zipes 1993: 27). Zipes points to the colour red which was at the time, as it is today, associated with "[…] sin, sensuality, and the devil" (Zipes 1993: 26). This means that Red Riding Hood is seen to be *asking for it* or leading the Wolf on through her clothing, which in turn makes Red Riding Hood to blame and she consequently, is not unequivocally a victim. Zipes also writes that Perrault presents Red Riding Hood as a spoiled girl who loves being the centre of attention and therefore relishes in the attention the

Wolf gives her (cf. Zipes 1993: 26). Red Riding Hood is described as being "[…] the prettiest you can imagine" and is adored by the people she knows, therefore, we come to the same conclusion as Zipes, that she is accustomed to being the centre of attention (Perrault 1999: 11). This further presses the point that Perrault is not only forcing standards on women about how not to behave, but also even on what is deemed unacceptable to wear, since the colour tells that she is sinful, sensual, who loves attention and is, consequently asking for it. Zipes' opinion of Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood* is that he has "[…] transformed a hopeful oral tale about the initiation of a young girl into a tragic one of violence in which the girl is blamed for her own violation" (Zipes 1993: 7). This evokes what we mentioned previously, that Red Riding Hood has become an iconic sign of the seducer who tricks men and, consequently must endure the consequences of her wrongful behaviour (cf. Zipes 1993: 8). The consequences of course is her death.

This is the main objective and how Perrault has made *Little Red Riding Hood* into a cautionary tale. He has filled the story with violence, seduction, power, rape and with a tragic outcome. There is no hope for Red Riding Hood because in order to make an impact as a cautionary tale, it must be a gruesome and deadly in order to illustrate proper and improper behaviour. Perrault does not state the patriarchal rules to the readers, however, he essentially provides the implicit rules through Red Riding Hood's mistakes. The rules Red Riding Hood broke are, that she strayed from the path, wore red and talked to a stranger, which illustrates that she invited the situation and the Wolf. Red Riding Hood, thereby, defies fundamental patriarchal rules that enforce essentialism and inherently try to teach girls to be silent and submissive. Perrault's message, therefore, is that young girls must adhere to the patriarchal essentialism and follow patriarchal virtues and implicit rules.

As if the story itself did not convey the cautionary message clear enough, there is a little rhyme at the end of every one of Perrault's' stories, referred to as "The Moral of This Tale" (Perrault 1999: 13). Perrault's conclusion for *Little Red Riding Hood* is that it is, as mentioned earlier, dangerous for young girls to talk to strangers since wolves are not necessarily animals in the literal sense. As Perrault writes:

> From this story one learns that children,
>
> Especially young girls,
>
> Pretty, well-bread, and genteel,

Are wrong to listen to just anyone,

And it's not at all strange,

If a wolf ends up eating them.

I say a wolf, but not all wolves

Are exactly the same.

Some are perfectly charming,

Not loud, brutal or angry,

But tame, pleasant, and gentle,

Following young ladies

Right into their homes, into their chambers,

But watch out if you haven't learned that tame wolves

Are the most dangerous of them all

(Perrault 1999: 13)

This warning emphasises the conclusion we have already come to, which is that he does not represent a Wolf in the literal sense of the word. He symbolises a man who preys on young beautiful, naïve and spoiled upper class girls who do not understand the meaning, or consequences, of this predatory situation.

When we read it now, we see that Perrault's version of *Little Red Riding Hood* does not serve neither men nor women well and that both sexes are presented at their worst. Red Riding Hood is naïve as she sees no danger in giving the Wolf the information about where she is going, who she is and what she is doing, while the Wolf is a predator whose only mission is to take advantage of naïve young girls. Cautionary tales represent and mirror the society in which they were written and, moreover, give us insight into the troubles, worries and views people had. If the scenarios within a fairy tale never happened, there would be no need for cautionary tales, however. Therefore, we can assume that Perrault's goal was to highlight the dangers of this situation and use the tale for the didactic potential it has.

3.5 The Grimm's *Little Red Cap*

The Grimm's rewrote their version several times and we are presented with "a dear little girl" and "a sweet little maiden", namely Red Cap (Grimm 1999: 13) (Zipes 1993: 135). She is portrayed as young and innocent who is cherished by those around her. Red Cap is, in contrast to Red Riding Hood, given very specific instructions by her mother to "walk properly, and don't stray from the path" (Grimm 1999: 14). As mentioned above, these instructions are not uttered in *Little Red Riding Hood,* however, a similar set of instructions are implied in the sense that there is a social set of rules of conduct that is imprinted in society and that all must follow, including Red Riding Hood. In *Little Red Cap,* however, they are clearly spoken by her mother. Therefore, the instructions given, are an addition to the set of instructions that all girls must follow in order to comply with the order of society, and Red Cap fails on both accounts as she does not comply with neither of the set rules of conduct.

The moral in this tale is not, as mentioned explicitly stated here as it is in Perrault's version, nonetheless, this does not mean that it is not present. Lilyane Mourey writes in her *Introduction aux contes de Grimm et Perrault* that:

> Perrault argues for total submission of the woman to her husband. Feminine coquetry (which is only the privilege of the dominant class) disturbs and upsets him: it could be the sign of female independence. It opens the way for the amorous conquest which endangers one of the fundamental values of society – the couple, the family. As we have seen, the heroines of the tales are very pretty, loyal, dedicated to their household chores, modest and docile and sometimes a little stupid insofar as it is true that stupidity is almost a quality in women for Perrault. Intelligence could be dangerous. In his mind as in that of many men (and women) beauty is an attribute of woman just as intelligence is the attribute of man
>
> (qtd in Zipes 1993: 31)

This is the view of virtues and qualities that Perrault set forth in fairy tales, but that the Grimms maintained and adopted. Red Cap behaves in the same way as Red Riding Hood and it is the male, Wolf or huntsman, who portrays the quality of intelligence.

Susan Brownmiller further emphasises that women within this fairy tale are describes as inferior to the male figures and are victims of male violence and that they must, in order to survive place themselves under male protection as she says that:

> Sweet, feminine, Little Red Riding Hood is off to visit her dear old grandmother in the woods. The wolf lurks in the shadows, contemplating a tender morsel. Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, we learn, are equally defenceless before the male wolf's strength and cunning … The wolf swallows both females with no sign of struggle … *Red Riding Hood* is a parable of rape. There are frightening male figures abroad in the woods – we call them wolves, among other names – and females are helpless before them. Better stick close to the path, better not be adventurous. If you are lucky, a *good friendly* male may be able to save you from certain disaster
>
> (qtd in Tatar 1999:8)

3.5.1 Persephone and Loss of Innocence

Red Cap breaks a vital regulation set by her mother. She strays from the path and, in addition, is lured deeper into the woods by the Wolf. The Wolf suggests to Red Cap that she "look around for a while" and asks if she has "seen the beautiful flowers all about?" (Grimm 1999: 14). As the young innocent girl Red Cap is, she runs of into the woods to pick flowers for her Grandmother, and for every flower she sees, there is a more beautiful one further into the woods and she loses herself. There are clear similarities between Red Cap and that of the myth of Persephone. Persephone, the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, is gathering flowers when Hades, god of the underworld, kidnaps her and takes her to the underworld (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 2014). This version of Persephone is explained by Sharon Rose Wilson that Persephone " leaves the earth, not of her free will, but because Hades abducts and rapes her, symbolizing male usurpation" (Wilson 1993: 273). This evokes the Grimm's version of *Little Red Cap* in the sense that she is also tricked and raped by the Wolf. In addition, the myth of Persephone can be linked to oral versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* in the sense that they are both tales of initiation and of young girls' coming of age.

The myth of Persephone is also analysed in Holly Virginia Blackford's book, *The Myth of Persephone in Girls' Fantasy Literature*, where she states that:

> [b]yronic boys and the men mysteriously doubling them lure the girls into a toy relationship, take over their souls, and then stay behind in the underworld whilst girls move on. They thus paradoxically serve as punitive consequences for development and as warnings for the loss of self that will occur if girls do not choose "return" to civilization
>
> (Blackford 2012: 5)

This tells us, again, that both *Little Red Cap* and *Little Red Riding Hood* serves as cautionary tales and to venture into the woods in itself is dangerous, however, it is even more dangerous to loose oneself in the woods and not return to the civilised world. There is also a focus here that girls must choose to return, meaning that Red Cap or Red Riding Hood must consciously make a choice to escape in order to not loose themselves or lose their souls in the woods. Thus, we can interpret that Red Riding Hood and Red Cap are incapable of saving themselves because they are in essence still lost and does not have a sense of self or identity. Therefore, they are a perfect match to attain all patriarchal virtues, such as silence, inferiority and submission since they have no identity of their own and they must attain the identity patriarchy deems appropriate for women.

Furthermore "[f]lowers are in themselves a symbol of childhood and innocence" which reflects that some elements within the literary narratives still holds traces from the oral versions of the tales, as initiation stories of young girls turning into women (*Symbols* 1996: 395). These traces are recognisable because they stand as oppositions to the strong emphasis on rules and regulations. However, because literary fairy tales have shifted the focus of these tales, the simplicity of picking flowers is also interpreted, as we have seen above, in other ways, because the surrounding focus on strict rules leads us to read it from a patriarchal perspective. Another interpretation is that the "flowers were once lovely boys, now the pride of the flowering spring" (Blackford 2012: 4). This also refers us to the loss of innocence in Red Cap, however, this time by her own accord as she is in essence picking young boys, choosing the best and most beautiful ones. With this in mind, Red Cap, is not as innocent as she might appear. This rendering of Red Cap furthers an interpretation in which she is in part to blame for the violence acted upon her, because she set out to find a man, or boy. Thusly, she knowingly places herself in a situation where predators roam. Again, this illustrates the given rules we have in society that because of Red Cap's actions she can be blamed, because a young girl should not set out to find a man, at least not on her own. We might even assume that the in the time *Little Red Cap* was written her

family might have appointed a suitable man for her and to venture out on her own to find one was unacceptable behaviour.

The loss of innocence in young Red Cap is supported even further in a frequently cited reading of *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Little Red Cap*, which is that they are stories of violence and seduction (cf. Zipes 1993: 1, 7-8 and Bettelheim 1991: 169). Interestingly the link to rape and sexual abuse becomes even clearer in *Little Red Cap,* when the Wolf is described as "satisfied his desires" (Grimm 1999: 15). This quote describes the Wolf's feelings, in bed, after he has devoured Red Cap, therefore, the association between desire and bed, along with a reminder of Perrault's "The Moral of This Tale", leads us in the direction and conclusion of sexual abuse. Zipes is one theorist who advocates that *Little Red Cap,* or at least all literary versions of the fairy tale, are stories of rape, which makes them extreme forms of cautionary tales. At the same time, he also says that it is "a good warning for girls when you consider how widespread rape is in our culture" (Zipes 1993: 10). This statement reveals the true nature of a cautionary tale, which is that a widespread problem needs to be addressed and someone needs to be made an example of in order to warn others. The problem, however, is that we again come back to society's unspoken rules towards women, and cautionary tales advocates these patriarchal rules and their lesson to us is that they must be followed in order to not be subjects of violence.

3.5.2 Patriarchy and Rules

We have already discussed that rules are an important feature in cautionary tales. The rules that are exposed in fairy tales operate from a patriarchal ideology. Terry Eagleton notes that:

> [t]he study of ideology is among other things an inquiry into the ways in which people may come to invest in their own unhappiness. It is because being oppressed sometimes brings with it some slim bonuses that we are occasionally prepared to put up with it
>
> (Eagleton 2007: xxii)

Eagleton's quote evokes the misery portrayed in fairy tales where women continuously are subjugated and have settled for being overpowered because of a lack of an alternative. Red Cap is oppressed and portrayed as pretty and somewhat stupid, which makes it important to again note that these cautionary fairy tales were written by male authors.

Within a patriarchal ideology the set rules that function to oppress women are impossible to bypass without severe repercussions. One of the rules that young girls need to adhere to is to not give away personal information. Red Cap's willingness to provide the Wolf with information as he asks a series of questions such as "[w]here are you headed", "[w]hat's that you've got under your apron?" and "[w]here does your grandmother live" is dangerous (Grimm 1999: 14). She breaks with instructions that apply to all young girls as she willingly gives the information and trusts a stranger, which is also very much accentuated in Perrault's version. Red Cap is seemingly dim-witted to the point that she does not understand the danger that the Wolf represents and therefore sees no harm in being friendly and answering any questions the Wolf has. The lesson here is that silence is a fundamental patriarchal virtue for women.

Red Cap makes yet another mistake when she enters her Grandmother's house. Here Red Cap has a sensation, or intuition that something is not as it should be. The familiar house she knows well feels strange and even before Red Cap sees or speaks to the Wolf, she does have a strong feeling that something is wrong as she says "I'm usually so glad to be at Grandmother's, but today I feel so nervous" (Grimm 1999: 15). Red Cap might, seemingly, be naïve, however, she is not completely oblivious to the fact that this might possibly be a dangerous situation and her instincts tell her that, even though everything around her is familiar, something is not normal. Red Cap does continue, however, and disregards this feeling, thus leaving herself vulnerable to the Wolf who consequently has the opportunity to divulge his desires to eat her.

The familiar space that is Red Cap's Grandmother's house, then becomes unfamiliar with her Grandmother missing and with the Wolf assuming her identity. Red Cap becomes confused as she recognises everything in the space, at the same time as it feels completely foreign to her. This links the feeling that Red Cap has to the notion of the uncanny. Sigmund Freud explains "that the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud 2003: 124). The house and the Grandmother have long been familiar to Red Cap and she knows them well, however, now Red Cap reveals an uncertainty and a feeling of danger attached to the this uncanny situation and she becomes uncertain. Freud continues and writes that the uncanny essentially is intellectual uncertainty (cf. Freud 2003: 125). This is what Red Cap experiences when she does and does not recognise her Grandmother, both at the same time. This is also a trace back to the oral initiation tales where the protagonist is a child and not a child at the same time as she is growing

into adulthood and becoming a woman, therefore she knows herself and does not know herself at the same time. However, Red Cap tries to unravel the uncertainty by asking the Wolf a series of questions, which is a sure way to rid herself of this uncanny sensation and reveal the truth. This is also a lesson for the readers of *Little Red Cap*, which tells us to pay more attention to our surroundings, search for the truth and trust your instincts, or else we might be eaten and die. Nonetheless, since Red Cap is unable to decipher the truth about who she is interrogating she is again essentialised and the Wolf is the one who obtains his goals while Red Cap is eaten because of her inherent female stupidity.

One of the main differences in *Little Red Cap* as opposed to *Little Red Riding Hood* is that the story does not end when the protagonist is eaten. There is a clear distinction between the stories here. The Grimm's have made it possible for the protagonist to redeem herself by turning this ending around and giving Red Cap and her Grandmother the ability to survive consummation. We as readers also understand that since the story does not end with Red Cap being eaten, she is not dead. We are presented with a glimmer of hope as the Huntsman appears. The Huntsman represents the turning point in the story and acts as the saviour to a damsel in distress. The Huntsman is a sensible and clever man who does not ignore his instincts that something is wrong, the way that Red Cap herself did just a few minutes earlier. This leads us to the assumption that the Huntsman represents one out of two male types within a patriarchal ideology. Male characters within literary traditions are either, like the Huntsman, heroic and intelligent and there to assist and save the day, or they are, like the Wolf, vicious creatures with an agenda to take advantage of foolish and naive young girls. This coincides with Bettelheim's point that:

> [t]he figures of fairy tales are not ambivalent – not good and bad at the same time, as we all are in reality. But since polarization dominates the child's mind, it also dominates fairy tales. A person is either good or bad, nothing in between
>
> (Bettelheim 1991: 9)

This reveals that when the Huntsman has fulfilled his duty, he exits the story as there is no further need for him. The function that the Huntsman serves is to save Red Cap, that is, to help her survive so that she can develop from being a young adolescent into a grown woman who has learned to conform to the rules that have been placed on her. Red Cap is not capable of acting as her own saviour and would have suffered the same fate as Red Riding Hood, had there

not been a Huntsman around to save her. This is because Red Cap is still within the boundaries of an extreme patriarchal ideology where women are believed to be helpless.

Interestingly, the Red Cap who is eaten and the Red Cap we see after she is cut from the Wolf's belly, seemingly are two very different characters, to the extent where we might say that she has been reborn, through a caesarean (cf. Tatar 1999: 8). This presents a smarter Red Cap who, surely, cannot be fooled the same way twice. We see this when Red Cap encounters a second Wolf. Although a different Wolf, the figure remains static and behaves exactly like the first one, signalling that the Wolf never progresses or grows as a character.

Red Cap the second time around a smarter and maybe slightly older, and certainly more experienced person that she was before. She has been given a second chance and has presumably learned the lessons that she should not stray from the path or talk to strangers. Still, we have not completely returned to the strong and cunning girl of the oral tales. Rather, we are still left with a female protagonist who is not self-sufficient or capable of survival on her own. It is her Grandmother this time who is the saviour. The Grandmother instructs Red Cap to lure the Wolf to the trough with sausage water, so he slides off the roof and into the trough and drowns. Even though Red Cap is responsible for the manual labour of filling the trough with sausage water, she is by no means responsible for her own salvation.

The patriarchal structure that both infuses society as well as literature reveals itself time and again in the way that we have discussed here, that young women are portrayed as simple minded, naïve, stupid and unable to survive on their own. If any woman inhabits any of these traits of being chatty, trustworthy, young, female or beautiful, she is rendered incapable, which is the Red Cap that we know from the beginning of the story. Therefore the patriarchal structure remains in place and a young beautiful woman remains incapable of being smart, clever and capable of saving herself in dangerous situations.

As we can see here, neither female nor male characters are shown much diversity in these two versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* or *Little Red Cap*. They do, however, reveal the stereotypes that we have to deal with and the way we view what men and women should be and behave like.

3.6 Delarue's *The Story of Grandmother*

What is interesting is that the unforgiving view of women that we have seen in both *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Little Red Cap* is very different from what we are presented with in Paul Delarue's version. In *The Story of Grandmother* we recognise that many of the main elements are the same. We are presented with a girl who is sent out by her mother, to bring food and drink for her Grandmother and on her way meets a Wolf. The similarities continue when the young protagonist enters her Grandmother's house and starts to question her appearance. It is here that the nameless protagonist is different from those previously discussed, adhering to what Andrew Teverson explains to be a "cardinal rule" as far as folk-tale protagonists are concerned, namely has to be clever. (cf. Teverson 2013: 19) The words 'folk tale' in themselves echoes this version further back towards its oral origins as Marina Warner writes that:

> many fairy tales are called 'folk tales', and are attributed to oral tradition, and considered anonymous and popular in the sense of originating not among the élite, but among the unlettered, the *Volk*
>
> (Warner 2014: xvi)

Furthermore, as Jack Zipes points to that:

> [f]airy tales were first *told* by gifted tellers and were based on rituals intended to endow with meaning the daily lives of members of a tribe. As *oral folk tales*, they were intended to explain natural occurrences such as change of the seasons and shifts in the weather or to celebrate the rites of harvesting, hunting, marriage, and conquest. The emphasis in most folk tales was on communal harmony
>
> (Zipes 1999: 333)

Because *The Story of Grandmother* portrays a hopeful consolatory tale and a tale of initiation, portraying a young girl's transgression into adulthood, it presents us with inherent elements of the oral traditions. While the story is now undeniably a written text, nonetheless it stands closer to oral versions, and has in this sense not originated among, or been thought of as primarily directed to, the élite, as Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood* (cf. Zipes 1993: 25, 28). Zipes provides us with different oral versions, similar to *The Story of Grandmother*, where he clarifies that the majority of the protagonists in these tales, save themselves, without any assistance (cf.

Zipes 1993: 5). Furthermore, the oral tales are a point of view on women, made by women, and these female protagonists are, consequently, able and independent.

Because *The Story of Grandmother* displays more similarities to folk tales and oral traditions it does not come across as a cautionary tale to the same degree as *Little Red Riding Hood* nor *Little Red Cap*. The protagonist is not given instructions by her mother in the way that Red Cap is, neither does the focus lie on the proper conduct of young girls. The protagonist is portrayed as a young girl transgressing into adulthood, however, as there are links in the story to needlework and knitting, which were typical chores for young women. Consequently the Wolf asks, "[w]hich path are you going to take, […] the path of needles or the path of pins?" (Delarue 1999: 10). The Wolf here points to the life choice that the young protagonist will have to take in the near future. This evokes Marina Warner's statement about female fairy tale authors where the element of a woman's life choice was included. Warner notes that "the stories' greater purpose" was "to reveal possibilities, to map out a different way and a new perception of love, marriage, women's skills, thus advocating a means of escaping imposed limits and prescribed destiny" (Warner 1995: 24). The protagonist here is, in Warner's words, portrayed as having skills, and this version emphasises and values these skills which stands in complete opposition to Perrault's and the Grimm's versions where Red Riding Hood/Cap is described as stupid and her only notable attributes are beauty and innocence. Nonetheless, the restraints of patriarchy are still present, and there are certain roles and paths for women that the young protagonist cannot escape, as a life of domesticity is believed to be in a woman's nature.

Another interesting aspect that links this closer to its oral traditions is what Zipes say is characteristic to folk tales, that:

> nor does it seem that the little girl was killed in any of the folk-tale versions. She shrewdly outwits the wolf and saves herself. No help from granny, hunter, or father!
>
> (Zipes 1993: 23)

The emphasis lies in that the young girl can, and must, take care of herself, which might be because there are not always someone around to come to your aid, therefore, it is best to not be dependent on it.

Zipes also explains that the forbearers of Perrault:

> [i]n the 15th and 16th centuries, violence was difficult to explain on rational grounds. There was a strong superstitious belief in werewolves and witches, uncontrollable magical forces of nature, which threatened the lives of peasant population
>
> (Zipes 1993: 23)

This evokes the notion previously discussed, that oral tales were narratives to explain events and occurrences in an entire community and consequently werewolves were a way to explain how children went missing in the woods, at the same time as they entertainingly explained how to avoid being eaten by one.

One of the main differences between all the three different versions focused on in this chapter is the endings, and *The Story of Grandmother* gives us yet another. This one is, however, perhaps the most satisfying, because, as Zipes would say, there is no warped female perspective (cf. Zipes 1993: 4). We are presented with a normal female protagonist who is not only able to take care of herself but also take action when she realises that something is wrong. The protagonist is quick to question if this person dressed as her Grandmother, in her Grandmother's bed really is who she appears and imitates to be and she asks questions about everything she finds peculiar and out of the ordinary. The Wolf reveals himself during this questioning and says that "[t]he better to eat you with, my child!" when he is asked about his big mouth (Delarue 1999: 11). This question occurs in all three versions, but in Perrault's and the Grimm's she is immediately eaten afterwards. The protagonist in *The Story of Grandmother* on the other hand is able to keep calm and cunningly thinks of a way out of the situation, so she asks to go outside and relieve herself (cf. Delarue 1999: 11).

For the first time, then, we see a clever, smart and intelligent young girl who is not, as the other two, oblivious as to what the actual situation is and what is about to happen to her. The protagonist manages to trick the Wolf into letting her step outside to relieve herself and when she is outside she ties the rope, which the Wolf fastened to her leg, to a tree and runs home (cf. Delarue 1999: 11). The protagonist in this version is an able girl who thinks for herself and acts according to the situation. She, therefore, adheres to Teverson's rule, which is the "cardinal rule" that "the folk-tale hero" has to be clever, which we have discussed previously in this chapter (Teverson 2013: 19). However, the important distinction, which we touched upon earlier, is that the rule refers to folk tales and not necessarily fairy tales, which are mostly categorised as literary versions intended for the upper and/or educated classes. This further

presses the point that Perrault and the brothers Grimm have adapted this tale into a cautionary tale therefore placing it far away from their folk tale origins that does no longer follow Teverson's cardinal rule.

Another notable difference in this orally inspired version, is, as Zipes has noted, that the "oral tales lack the motif of the red riding hood or the color red" (Zipes 1993: 23). This enforces the probability that this version is more closely linked to the oral tradition and it also gives us one indication as to why the protagonist remains nameless as her name has, in literature, been linked to the colour red and her red clothes. Furthermore, the lack of red also eliminates what we discussed about the other two versions, that is, the danger element and the seduction aspect. Because the reader has no connotations to the colour red and neither the title, nor the name of the girl signals danger, therefore the ending within this version can easily turn around and she can free herself.

The differentiation of the colour red is also reminiscent of M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village* (2004) which is a modern retelling and film adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Here the colour red is designated to the dangerous creatures who live the woods, while the inhabitants of the village, and consequently the Red Riding Hood character of the story, Ivy Walker, wear yellow as a contrast, which is the colour of distress. This signals that it is the community itself that is in distress, and, consequently, need saving by the cunning and self-sufficient village girl. Red once again signals danger and therefore the colour red is seen as a forbidden and is never worn by the villagers. This is interesting as it places Ivy Walker closer to the nameless protagonist in *The Story of Grandmother* and neither protagonist portrays any links to being the dangerous seductive character of the literary version who end up being raped. This is also because Ivy Walker, like the nameless protagonist, is not only able to save herself, but also acts as the saviour of the male protagonist, Lucius Hunt, even though she is blind and cannot see the Wolf coming. This in turn makes Ivy, not only similar to the protagonist in *The Story of Grandmother*, but also the Huntsman from the Grimm version *Little Red Cap*. This signals that she is a compilation of characters across these different versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, as she is Red Riding Hood, the Huntsman in addition to the nameless girl from Delarue's version.

3.6.1 The Better to Eat You with, My Child!

There also is a stronger focus on consumption in *The Story of Grandmother*. The main objective of the Wolf is to eat both the Grandmother and the protagonist, and this remains the same in all

three versions. The Wolf in *The Story of Grandmother*, however, manages to trick the protagonist into eating and drinking the flesh and blood of her own Grandmother. The Wolf says to the protagonist "[t]ake some of the meat in there along with the bottle of wine on the shelf" (Delarue 1999: 10). This focus on devouring is what folklorist Alan Dundes interprets as having "more to do with children's anxieties about being devoured than with the adult sexual anxieties that came to be foregrounded as the story evolved" (Tatar 1999: 9). This places the story further away from a cautionary tale, as it does not lecture listening children, and more towards a consolatory tale where the outcome of the protagonist is to be released from maltreatment and end on a happy note as the protagonist manages to escape and return back home.

In this way *The Story of Grandmother* addresses concerns and fears without explicitly revealing any sort of didactic purpose. While *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Little Red Cap* focus on violence and sexual abuse, which is more the fears of adults than children. Therefore, *The Story of Grandmother* gives the impression of being written, or told, with the child in mind which evokes what Bettelheim says, namely that:

> [t]elling a fairy tale with a particular purpose other than that of enriching the child's experience turns the fairy story into a cautionary tale, a fable, or some other didactic experience
>
> (Bettelheim 191: 154)

The story also gives insight into rural life as an initiation story, as opposed to *Little Red Riding Hood and Little Red Cap,* which are, as stated, clearly targeted for the upper educated classes. Therefore, *The Story of Grandmother* reflects a society where a patriarchal structure is in place, but does not place the same limitations, nor rules, on women that *Little Red Riding Hood* or *Little Red Cap* do. Delarue has returned us to a tale that reveals oral traditions of initiation into adulthood, and a consolatory tale that reveals the trials and tribulations this girl has to face and overcome. Delarue has revealed a traditional tale where a young girl must chose her path in life and decide how her future will look like. This is the opposite of what Perrault and the Grimms who do not provide their protagonists with much of a future and they have created a patriarchal ideology that oppress and subjugate what they consider to be the weaker sex.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter have revealed that there are major differences between the literary and oral versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Even though we are dealing with a written version in *The Story of Grandmother,* we have seen that this is closely based on oral traditions, with its strong female protagonist and a happy ending. What is interesting in comparing literary and oral versions is that both literary versions convey very restrictive gender roles and emerge from a strong patriarchal society. Women are clearly told that some behaviour and actions are unsuitable for their sex and gender and, therefore, are also to blame for the violent acts that they fall victim to, when they do not follow the rules given by the author, adults or of the patriarchal structure at large. These rules are vital in the literary versions as they outline the downfall of the protagonists.

In conclusion, neither Red Riding Hood nor Red Cap have the ability to act as their own saviours because they represent women within patriarchal societies and women, here, are not seen as equals to their male counterparts. However, we have also seen that men are portrayed with strict regulations within these versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, albeit not to the extent that women are. The men we are presented with through the Wolf are predatory and malicious, and Robert Darnton points out that since fairy tales have traditionally been passed on from generations of women they seem to give out "[…] hate and prejudice against men" and signal that "[…] the woman's superiority consists in her ability to bear children" (qtd. Tatar 1999: 7). Darnton therefore claims that this is the reason why the Wolf "[…] attempted to play the role of a pregnant woman, having living things inside his belly" (qtd. Tatar 1999: 7). Darnton's opinion is that this fairy tale makes a mockery of men and their inability to bear children and therefore he is punished and killed for his crime of assuming the role of a pregnant woman. This is an interesting counterpoint to what we previously have discussed. It points to female biological superiority over men, as opposed to the patriarchal structure that sees to limit and portray submissive women. Here, in fact, we deal with a jealous Wolf who is mocked and made inferior by women.

What we have discussed in this chapter, then, reveals that the patriarchal structure does not serve neither men nor women favourably. The labels are strict and gender roles are inescapable to both genders. What is interesting is that is seems that Perrault's and the Grimm's versions, written and intended for the upper classes, function as stricter and with more violent

consequences than Delarue's oral counterpart. All versions are strikingly similar but with very different outcomes. We move from a cautionary tale which depicts violence, rape and death (Perrault) to yet another cautionary tale of violence, rape, rescue and revenge (the Grimm's) while the final version hints to rape but also lets the protagonist act as her own saviour allowing her to simply run home, which is the oral tradition and therefore depicts a consolatory tale (Delarue).

What Luce Irigaray suggests to escape the rules of patriarchy is that "[o]ne must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it" (Irigaray 1985: 76). While I would argue that both Red Riding Hood and Red Cap fail to follow Irigaray's suggestion, Delarue's portrayal of his female protagonist is at least a beginning. She thwarts the female standard by first acting the role of stereotypical female to then break from the boundaries of being completely subordinate, dim-witted and without the ability to act as her own saviour. She reveals herself a smart and relatively independent and escapes violence and rape relying on her own wits. Although, I would further argue, as we have touched upon in our discussion of Delarue's version, that the protagonist is, and will always remain, within the frameworks of patriarchy, nonetheless she does have some kind of choice.

In the next chapter we will discuss Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*. Here we find that *The Lovely Bones* reads as a modern version of *Little Red Riding Hood* because it depicts a young girl who is raped and killed by her neighbour. Perrault does in fact call his Wolf for "Old Neighbour Wolf", which further links the two stories together (Perrault 1999: 12). *The Lovely Bones* presents us with many of the same rules that we have discussed here, not to stray from the path and not to talk to strangers, which are equally linked to her rape and murder in this novel as they are here in *Little Red Riding Hood.* Furthermore we will discuss how a seemingly safe environment can secretly envelop harmful elements, and delve deeper into the patriarchal structure and investigate how such a structure allows violence to go unpunished.

Chapter 4: Who is to Blame in *The Lovely Bones*?

> I began to leave my body; I began to inhabit the air and the silence
>
> (Sebold 2002: 15)

4.1 Introduction

The young girl Susie, whose death and murder occur within the first pages of the novel, narrates *The Lovely Bones*. Thereby, she tells her story from her own personal heaven where she watches her family, friends and killer move on with their lives without her. Susie is forever trapped in her own self-created little world, her version of heaven, which mirrors the security she thought the world she once lived in, consisted of. She is essentially contained in what Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar refer to, in their reading of *Jane Eyre*, as "a mirror […] a sort of chamber, a mysterious enclosure in which images of the self are trapped" (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 340-341). Because of the violation by a familiar man in her neighbourhood, she has created a world, which is as close to a matriarchy as possible. Susie is in complete control of her heaven, which partly overlaps with those of a roommate, Holly, and her intake counsellor, Franny. Franny explains to Susie that "[a]ll you have to do is desire it, and if you desire it enough and understand why−really know−it will come" (Sebold 2002: 20). This is how Susie can create a partial matriarchy, where there are no men present as long as she does not allow them to. She does, however, point out that:

> [a]fter a few days in heaven, I realized that the javelin-throwers and the shot-putters and the boys who played basketball in the cracked blacktop were all in their own version of heaven. Theirs just fit with mine
>
> (Sebold 2002: 18)

This explains that Susie can keep anyone at a distance that she does not feel comfortable with having too close, but as long as their version coincides with hers they will remain in the outskirts. Susie has marginalise men as opposed to what we see in *Little Red Riding Hood*,

which places women in the margins. This is because Susie has enabled herself to control her own personal environment and can control their movements in relation to herself.

The novel can be read as a critique of patriarchal ideology and how this structure stands helpless to prosecute and eliminate violence. Patriarchal ideology, with its underlying implied rules, preoccupies and dictates the way we think about ourselves and others and make us into products of this kind of value system. The rules that we have discussed, that apply to how women must behave in accordance to patriarchal virtues is why we also can categorise Susie in the same way as *Little Red Riding Hood.* Victims are partly blamed, as we mentioned that Zipes states that Red Riding Hood "contributed to her own rape" (Zipes 1993: 27). We can press the same argument that Susie ignored the same rules that apply to Red Riding Hood, namely, not to stray from the path as she, alone, took a shortcut across the field on her way home. The result was that she, exactly like Red Riding Hood, encountered the predator that led to her death. The patriarchal ideological rules, values and virtues that we have discussed in the previous chapter will also be important here, as they have remained static, which also means that the victim is still partly blamed for the violence acted upon her.

What we will look for in *The Lovely Bones* is how ideology represents views on sex and gender, but more importantly how underlying, or implicit, rules, that singularly apply to women, and social norms become firmly fixed in place within certain ideologies. Eagleton suggests that "[t]here is no such thing as presuppositionless thought" (Eagleton 2007: 3). This reveals a possibility that everything in this sense is ideology, thereby, emphasising that ideology exists as both implicit and explicit rules within a community. We have internalised these rules and experience ideology as something that defines us as men of women. Ideology has no one inventor but is ingrained in tradition and culture that have developed and changed with time. What we will discuss is the patriarchal ideology that places women in the margins, subjugates and renders them inferior and how this is challenged or represented in *The Lovely Bones*.

Our viewpoint here will be the same as throughout this thesis. I will argue that the Western world is underpinned by a patriarchal ideology, and is structured according to what Helene Cixous, inspired by Jacques Derrida, calls patriarchal binary thought which sees the world in gendered polar opposites such as male/female, masculine/feminine and father/mother (cf. Tyson 2006: 100). Cixous argues that "[o]ppositions like these organise the way we think" (Tyson 2006: 100). These binaries have divided our thoughts into hierarchal structures where one binary is always placed above the other. Therefore the question that Cixous poses is "[w]here is [the woman]?" within this hierarchy (qtd in Tyson 2006: 100). This question

becomes important when we discuss *The Lovely Bones* because we are within a patriarchal structure where the woman is always linked to the inferior.

As we have begun to discuss, the notion of patriarchy is relevant in this novel. If we first look at a definition from *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, it says that patriarchy "is a system of social relations in which the class 'men' have power over the class 'women' because women are sexually devalued" (Humm 1995: 201). This also relates back to Cixous' thought on binaries. When she asks where the woman is, she is also implying that women are always regarded as the less valuable. *The Lovely Bones* reveals such a society as a fundamentally flawed system and critiques its acceptance of violence as a side-effect of such an inequality, because violence becomes acceptable by the higher ranking binary. What we see in *The Lovely Bones,* and also *Little Red Riding Hood,* is the powerlessness that accompanies a patriarchal system and that violence, rape and murder are inevitable because there can never be rules or regulations powerful enough to prevent them. In addition, the rules and regulations only cure the symptom and not the diseased hierarchal binaries, which devaluate women. What *The Lovely Bones* also promotes is the lack of persecution we have to deal with and the helplessness of the family after the loss of their daughter. Their pursuit to return to normalcy proves difficult, moreover, when they all inherently blame themselves for not being able to protect their daughter.

For feminist, theorist Luce Irigaray patriarchy is a man's world and "[t]he society we know, our own culture, is based upon the exchange of women" (Irigaray 1985:170). Women are viewed as prizes of male conquest, which stress that women are objectified. This evokes the notion of the "male gaze" and that "the man looks; the woman is looked at" (Tyson 2006: 102). This presses that women serve as pawns in a male game and that "the woman – is merely an object to be seen" (Tyson 2006:102). This reveals an inherent dichotomy placed deep within our culture that has been in place for so long, signalled by the fact that we see it in *Little Red Riding Hood* written over 300 years ago.

The notions of sex and gender are difficult to distinguish, moreover, since biological differences lead to the inequality we see culturally. Gender is in reality treated equally in the way that Julia Kristeva says, namely that the distinction between masculine/feminine is equivalent to biological differences because "sexual, biological, psychological, and reproductive difference [between women and men] reflects a difference in … the social contract" (qtd in Tyson 2006: 103). This signals that the social rules and behavioural etiquette linked to gender, which dictate proper and improper behaviour, are the same for sex and gender.

There is no distinction between sex and gender, a woman must act and be feminine, and a man must act and be masculine. This makes escape from feminine and masculine standards impossible and the social boundaries of one's sex become extremely rigid.

In this chapter, we will focus on specific characters, namely Susie, Abigail, Jack and Mr Harvey, and discuss their situation within a patriarchal society with a particular focus on how the ideological structure has influenced both men and women, and how patriarchy forms the storyline as well as views on the novel and within the novel. We will examine the social boundaries and how there can never be enough rules and regulations to save these women, or young girls. The act of rape and murder is a problem within a patriarchy as women are devalued and objectified. This objectification furthers the problem of violence towards women because it signals male dominance and that women are reduced to objects rather than equals.

In this sense, patriarchy allows and makes room for male predators and justifies violent acts by placing the blame on the victim. We have seen in *Little Red Riding Hood* that there is a long history and cultural norm where the victim of rape is blamed and depicted as having done something wrong which has resulted in rape. This echoes what feminist Katrine Kielos writes in *Voldtekt og Romantikk* that victims feel that they have misstepped and done something wrong that resulted in them being raped (cf. Kielos 2009: 44). Kielos continues to discuss that women, or girls, from a very young age have been taught by their family, and society in general, that rape is a possible outcome for girls who make mistakes and venture into the woods alone (cf. Kielos 2009: 44-46). Again, this furthers the idea that women are objects, there for the plucking, if they occupy spaces or places that are deemed by society unsuitable, or if they wear something provocative, as Red Riding Hood did with her red hood or cape. This forces the notion of how inequality remains a symptom of disease within this ideological patriarchal hierarchy.

4.2 Security in Suburbia

At first *The Lovely Bones* provides us with a false sense of security. Susie, the main protagonist, is a 14-year-old girl who lives an ordinary life as a young teenager in a typical suburban neighbourhood in the 1970s, with parents Jack and Abigail and siblings Lindsey and Buckley. This setting gives us a false sense of an innocent, safe and simpler time in which the suburbs

were seen as a safe place for newly started families. If we look up the word "suburbs" in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* we find that it is described as "an area where people live that is outside the centre of a city" (OALD 2008: 1532). The suburbs consequently, are designed as places that families build their homes away from the busy, crime filled and dangerous inner-city life.

The suburban neighbourhood we are presented with in *The Lovely Bones* is a place that is designed for families with children. Every unit is similar, they are families and for a single man, like Mr. Harvey, it is seen as strange to settle down. The suburbs are essentially trying to create an ideal family life which has the opportunity to create a perfect childhood for children, however, in *The Lovely Bones* this quickly proves to be unattainable as it is impossible to create a place that is absolutely safe. Jack Salmon notes "how weird the neighbourhood thought Mr. Harvey was with no regular job and no kids" (Sebold 2002: 69). This further reveals that for an unmarried man without children to settle down in a suburban neighbourhood is considered strange.

Susie's heaven is a child's simplest dream and is a place which is absolutely safe. Susie explain how she creates her heaven and says, "[w]e had been given, in our heavens, our simplest dreams" (Sebold 2002: 19). Because of Susie's age and experience, she has recreated her neighbourhood to mimic real life, only a safe version of it as she has experienced first-hand the dangerous elements, which have secretly thrived within the suburban space. She has furthered the sense of safety that suburbia is meant to be and this time she is in control and therefore, her heaven is the utopian setting suburbia strives to be because she is the powerful in this setting. At the same time as she has copied the world she knows, she has implemented some elements that reveal her actual age and that she is still a child, such as that:

> [t]here were no teachers in the school. We never had to go inside except for art class for me […] The boys did not pinch our backsides or tell us we smelled; our textbooks were *Seventeen* and *Glamour* and *Vogue*
>
> (Sebold 2002: 19)

Throughout the novel we see the illusion of the safe suburban neighbourhood crumble and only survive through Susie's depiction in heaven, which is the only truly safe space in which there are no dangers, no men or Wolves that can harm her.

Because Susie is the narrator of this story after her death, this leaves us with a special insight as she provides us with details of her rape and murder in hindsight. This retrospect is important because it provides us with a victim's perspective, in addition to a child's perspective, as opposed to a present tense narration by an omniscient narrator without personal involvement. This first person personal point of view functions to reveal her feelings of blame and guilt that she – paradoxically – experiences towards herself.

One reason for such feelings of guilt can be seen to lie with the pattern of binaries. As argued by Cixous and Clément, these are structures hierarchically, into a dominant part (male), and a subordinate part (female) (cf. Cixous and Clément 2008: 64). This makes possible the justification of violence by the dominant part and leaves the subordinate with answering and explaining why she is a victim, instead of the predator answering for his crimes. This is to some extent what we saw in *Little Red Riding Hood,* where I would clearly argue that no one asks to be raped and killed, but where patriarchal structures suggest that Red Riding Hood is asking for it. The story enforces the blame because of the way she dresses and because she disobeys and breaks the rules of who to talk to and what to do, consequently her behaviour is deemed improper and must bear consequences. What is interesting then is that this notion of, asking for it, and that there is a term in place for this, reveals that this is a common view in similar situations. Because it is common knowledge that young girls need to protect themselves and follow certain rules, the victims blame themselves and search for mistakes and alternative scenarios of how this could have been avoided.

Maggie Humm argues that "[f]eminist writing about violence towards women dispel several popular myths, namely that victims of violence 'ask for' or provoke violence" (Humm 1995: 293). This reveals a long tradition, which is emphasised by Perrault and the Grimms, that female victims of violence and rape ask for it. Sebold on the other hand has written a feminist text where she problematises the idea of, asking for it, and she reveals that this notion is false and outdated. Neither Susie, nor Red Riding Hood/Red Cap asks or invites the situations they find themselves in, and their only crime is that they have not followed neither the implicit nor explicit rules presented by the patriarchal ideology.

4.3 Susie Salmon: The Virgin and the Daughter

Susie Salmon bears many similarities to female fairy tale protagonists, especially Red Riding Hood, who typically is a young, beautiful maiden. Susie is young and innocent but at the same time she is not clueless to the fact that she is being objectified in a similar manner as Red Riding Hood. After she has died, Susie remembers that she did not react to the way that Mr. Harvey stared at her because "I'd had older men look at me that way since I'd lost my baby fat" (Sebold 2002: 9). She is aware that men are looking at her differently than when she was younger as she is becoming a young woman and with that, objectification is normal. With this objectification there are certain rules attached. Not for the ones who objectify but for the objectified, which evokes Luce Irigaray notion of the "*male gaze*" that looks, while "the woman is looked at" (Tyson 2006: 102). This also links us back to what we previously discussed, namely that the binaries, active/passive, the virtue of for women is passivity and silence. In an attempt to avoid this type of *gaze* women must follow the underlying rules, that we have discussed in the precious chapter, which are not venture out alone, not to talk to strangers and not to dress inappropriately, in order not to provoke something. Similar to *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Little Red Cap*, this leads us in the direction of a cautionary tale as Susie reveals what she sees as her own *mistakes* leading up to the attack.

We have seen in *Little Red Riding Hood* that it is the patriarchal view that the victim's mistakes that provoke the end results and, consequently, that the victim is at fault. The difference, however, between Red Riding Hood and Susie is that Red Riding Hood is blamed by society, the author and the readers, while Susie ultimately blames herself. That both protagonists, in a patriarchal framework, make what the governing ideology would categorise as mistakes. This signals what Terry Eagleton says that ideology "involve epistemological questions – questions concerned with our knowledge of the world" (Eagleton 2007: 2). Within a patriarchal ideology the knowledge contains the implicit internalised rules that are implemented on women from a young age, and that all are expected to know and follow. Thereby, to step outside of these regulations are fundamentally wrong from a patriarchal ideological standpoint and consequently seen as mistakes. We are lead to believe through Susie's narration that she has made mistakes and done something wrong which eventually led to her rape and murder.

In the first chapter Susie takes us through the events that lead to her attack, step by step, and dwells on the signs she feels like she should have paid more attention to or things she should have avoided altogether. This way of narrating leads us, as well as Susie, to believe that by following a certain set rules made for women she could still be alive and well, living in the suburban façade. Susie tries to structure the narrative within the rules that Perrault set in *Little Red Riding Hood,* which stands as the ultimate guide to avoid rape, and therefore to follow his "moral of the story" it certainly can be avoided, from Perrault's point of view. Thereby Susie, the narrator, blame herself for the events that took place which again critiques and reveals the disease that thrives in the kind of patriarchal hierarchy portrayed in *The Lovely Bones*.

4.3.1 Mistakes

From her perspective, Susie tells us that she ignores her instincts in the moments before her death and that she believes that she has disregarded three major signals. This is also what we are lead to believe in *Little Red Riding Hood,* as she too ignores her instincts that something is not as it should be. The first mistake is on her way home before she knows Mr. Harvey is close by, she can smell his cologne but as she says, "I had not been paying attention" (Sebold 2009: 7). Susie does not realise that she is not alone out in the field. Here, Susie reveals a young girl who is too preoccupied with herself and her own thoughts, and consequently she neglected a vital clue, which could have at least made her aware of the pending situation. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this is her retelling, which she explains in hindsight and therefore it is Susie who seemingly believes she made a mistake.

Susie explains that her second mistake comes only seconds later, when she fails to take in that Mr. Harvey knows her name without her ever having provided him with this information (cf. Sebold 2009: 7). Even though there might be a logical explanation for this as they are neighbours, which does not make it strange for Mr. Harvey to know her name. This information combined with Susie telling us that she:

> was aware that Mr. Harvey was looking at me strangely. I'd had older men look at me that way since I'd lost my baby fat, but they usually didn't lose their marbles over me when I was wearing my royal blue parka and yellow elephant bell-bottoms
>
> (Sebold 2009: 9)

Mr. Harvey does not simply objectify her and sees a young pretty girl, rather he has taken it one step further as this is an extreme form of objectification where he is not able to see her as anything but a victim.

The third mistake that she points to is a combination of politeness and curiosity. When Mr. Harvey wants to show her the hiding place he had dug out in the field, she wants to know how he did it and why he built it, the mechanics of it and who had taught him (cf. Sebold 2009: 11). This is of course a positive attribute for a child, to be curious and to explore how things work and function. We grow up as curious human beings and are urged by our parents, school and society in general to be curious of our surroundings. Curiosity is here seen as a difficult aspect in a patriarchal society, however, as young girls are encouraged to explore and be curious at the same time as there is a common saying that opposes this, "curiosity killed the cat", meaning that one should not be unnecessary curios as "inquisitiveness can lead one into dangerous situations" which it clearly is in Susie's, and also Red Riding Hood's case (*Phrases* 2015). They both display an eagerness to explore, which is not allowed within the patriarchal implicit rules.

From what her thoughts about Mr. Harvey are in hindsight, she feels that she should have avoided the situation altogether and suppressed her curiosity. Her curiosity outweighs her fear of him (cf. Sebold 2009: 12). Mr. Harvey also appeals to her politeness when Susie tries to leave, and he says, "[b]e polite and have a Coke, [...] I'm sure the other kids would" (Sebold 2009: 12). Here Mr. Harvey both questions and appeals to her upbringing, as he knows her parents and that she has been brought up to be a nice and polite young girl, and by doing so he essentially traps her without physically restraining her. He also has a natural authority as an adult, which is signalled when Susie says that "the natural authority of his age, and the added fact that he was a neighbor […] rooted me to the spot" (Sebold 2009: 7). Susie has like any other child been told to respect her elders and what we learn from fairy tales is not to answer back to adults and do as they say. She has also grown up in a suburban neighbourhood that has provided her with a false sense of security. We again come back to that there is no escaping the outcome in this novel, as we have already seen in fairy tales. There is a false sense of safety in suburbia, which has lead Susie to not abide by the rules linked to her sex, which patriarchy demands of her. The novel thereby reveals again what we have discussed before, that there is a fundamental flaw within our society that allows such acts to happen and go unpunished.

Susie, seemingly, ignores her instincts and feelings when she comes face to face with Mr. Harvey. As a woman she should have developed instincts to prevent this from happening. These instincts and fears have grown out of fairy tales, stories and rules within society, telling women how to behave or not behave, and how to avoid rape. As mentioned, Susie tells her story in hindsight and this leaves an ambivalence between her thoughts and reaction in real time versus what she tells us from heaven. We as readers must also take a standpoint as to whether or not Susie is a trustworthy narrator, meaning that her feelings after the event could have clouded her retelling. Susie says to herself in retrospect, "I felt like observing my way out of there, but I didn't. Why didn't I?" (Sebold 2009: 9). Why she did not is obvious as she runs through the events in retrospect and is just as much an observer as the reader and therefore it is impossible to act on anything. We are also told that Susie had an eerie feeling, or what she refers to as "the skeevies" and wanted to get out of the situation (Sebold 2009: 12). Susie, like Red Riding Hood, ignores this eerie feeling and follows the rules of politeness, which prove to be lethal in a patriarchal society.

Susie seemingly believes that she could have escaped if she had acted differently. She acts like a stereotypical victim in a patriarchal society and replays the scenes in her mind in order to reveal what she did wrong and how she could have avoided it. Trying to figure out what kind of *what if* scenario might have worked, what if she had taken another route home, what if she had walked together with someone, however, these, what if, scenarios are fruitless and serves no other purpose than to place the blame on the victim. We are given insight into her own realisations of what she feels she should have done in order to escape, or not be in the situation in the first place. Her instinct tells her to find the mistake in order to understand how she could have prevented it, but the interesting part here is not how she could have avoided rape, but why she is obsessing over it. This is because rape is so common that she feels that primal instincts should have helped her avert the situation and she should have thought about this sooner since many girls have been raped and will be raped. Again, this proves the point that an ideological patriarchal society not only allows rape, but fails in taking the appropriate precautions to prevent it from happening. Rape is a hazard women have to deal with on a daily basis. However, not to act courteous and neighbourly towards Mr. Harvey is impossible as she explained earlier to us, "[m]y mother liked his border flowers, and my father talked to him once about fertilizer" (Sebold 2009: 6). This statement makes Susie believe that Mr. Harvey is harmless, maybe a little strange and old-fashioned, but unsuspecting nonetheless (cf. Sebold 2009: 6).

I have used the word mistake here in the discussion, however, this is not to signal that Susie is to blame for her rape and murder. What this narration reveals is that a female victim will, in a patriarchal society, always search for mistakes and an explanation as to what she did wrong. Susie knows who the criminal is, but she is incapable of placing the entire blame away from herself, where it belongs and she frantically relives the horrid events in an attempt to find the escape route. As signalled in the discussion above, these mistakes remind us of the same mistakes Red Riding Hood/Red Cap makes, and in *The Lovely Bones* they function similarly in how they convey meaning to what we have seen in *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Little Red Cap*, as they portray cautionary tales. Here these cautions critique our own society, and emphasise the faults in such a blame system. A society that allows violence and rape to happen to girls and women without a functional system in place on how to prevent such acts, is through Sebold's novel portrayed as a diseased system that stands powerless to put an end to these acts of violence. Susie' reactions are completely normal and appropriate for her age and that is what makes her reaction, as she runs through the events in hindsight, so contorted as the narration tries to follow the patriarchal ideological patterns. It is not with Susie nor the rules that the problem lies. The problem is, as mentioned, that there will never be enough precautions to hinder such crimes, as the problem lies in the patriarchal structure that promotes the male gaze and the objectification of women, which comes as a natural side-effect of patriarchy. This has resulted in a normalcy of violence in society. This is where *The Lovely Bones* reveals a strong correlation with *Little Red Riding Hood*, they both reveal the uniformity of how society has accepted the presence of violence and found a way to endure it and move on since nothing can be done.

4.4 The Mother and Grandmother: Abigail and Lynn

The traditional role of the mother in fairy tales is that she is rather absent, but, more importantly, she is also often the one who presents the children with boundaries and rules. If we compare Abigail to all the different versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, the mother is there to give instructions and then her role is finished and she disappears. The mother in *Little Red Riding Hood* is the person who sends her daughter into harm's way, as Eric Berne's rendition of a reaction to the fairy tale signals when he asks, "[w]hat kind of mother sends a little girl into a

forest where there are wolves? Why didn't her mother do it herself, or go along with LRRH?" (qtd in Tatar 1999: 5). These thoughts of blame against the mother are what we see with Abigail as well. Abigail, the same as Susie, blames herself, thereby she becomes mentally absent and eventually physically absent, which is also similar to what we see in fairy tales.

When Abigail decides to leave her family, Susie's grandmother takes on her daughter's role as mother. The mother/grandmother role is in fairy tales is traditionally made redundant and replaced by a younger and more beautiful version of herself, such as a child or granddaughter as we can see, for example, in *Snow White* where she replaces both her mother and stepmother (Grimm 1999: 83- 89). Here in *The Lovely Bones*, however, the roles are switched around and the grandmother replaces first Susie, when she dies, and later Abigail, when she leaves. The inverted structure gives Lynn another purpose, and she again acts the role of a mother to her daughter's family.

To be a mother within a patriarchal framework is accompanied with several difficulties. This is also why Abigail and Lynn are difficult figures to analyse, because patriarchy defines them as a mother/grandmother and only that. Their personalities become supressed because a sense of self does not fit in with the figure of mother/grandmother. Women within patriarchy, like the mother in *Little Red Riding Hood*, have reproductive value and afterwards are meant to care for their children and rear them into adulthood, which both of these mothers are unable to manage. These are Abigail's given tasks and when she fails, she becomes lost, because her patriarchal identity is disrupted. Abigail resents the way that people look at her and she thinks that people are "defining her by her children, both living and dead" (Sebold 2009: 100). Abigail struggles with the patriarchal frameworks and start to oppose it as she resents that she is defined by her singular role as a mother. Nonetheless, the restraints of patriarchy is unbreakable and she can never regress from the role of mother back to her previous role, young maiden, and her outcome is to eventually become the old crone. This evokes what Marina Warner says that "the garrulous crone was established as an allegory of unwifely transgressions, of obedience, opinion, anger, outspokenness, and general lack of compliance" (Warner 1995: 43). The old crone signals the female who does not comply with her role as wife, mother nor grandmother or one who displays any sense of personality and self. Abigail is the old crone as she displays many of the elements discussed above, that she has an affair and leaves her family. In this sense, the old crone becomes synonymous with any woman who does not comply with the patriarchal standard of female virtue.

Lynn on the other hand is struggling with the fact that she is an aging woman and does no longer comply with patriarchal virtues of youth and beauty. She is in the process of becoming unimportant as her role as a mother is no longer valid. In her failure to comply with youth and beauty she at least tries to uphold the values and virtues of patriarchy on those around her. She tries to coerce Abigail, Susie, and Lindsey, into stereotypical female gender roles and she badgers them about their looks. Lynn tells Susie about the importance of being skinny and says "[y]ou need to get yourself starved down, honey, before you keep fat on for too long. Baby fat is just another way to say ugly" (Sebold 2009: 113). Society promotes and emphasises the importance of being skinny and not to be, is considered ugly. Abigail and Lynn are at this point at two opposite poles, in the sense that Abigail is fighting this ideology while here, Lynn stands as an upholder of its values. What Lynn says is that women are and will always be objectified, and to accomplish the main goal within a patriarchy, that is, marriage, women must conform to, and accept objectification and adhere to the present standards of beauty.

While Abigail opposes the patriarchal values that place extreme importance on youth and beauty. Lynn, on the other hand, represents and enforces this system where women are objects, meant to be seen, be beautiful and become mothers. Lynn has passed through all the designated stations for women and her purpose is now to see that her daughter and granddaughters fulfil their steps. Although, Lynn has lived within the patriarchal structure and promoted its values her drinking problem might reveal that she harbours an ambivalence to society and its value system. When she no longer has a clear purpose, alcohol becomes an outlet and way out for her.

Both Abigail and Lynn have, in Warner's definition as mentioned above, become the old crone. In this way, Abigail shares many similarities with Red Riding Hood's mother. They send their daughters out into a dangerous world and expects them to return home, but without providing the proper means to do so. At the same time, they can never provide their daughters with enough tools to prevent this because the patriarchal framework allows it to happen, without repercussions. Therefore, the fault does not lie with the mother, grandmother or the daughter, but with the fact that Susie/Red Riding Hood was without the necessary tools to save themselves and neither does society have the tools to avoid these situations.

Furthermore, Louis Tyson's *Critical Theory Today* paraphrases feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir saying that:

> women should not be content with investigating the meaning of their lives in their husbands and sons, as patriarchy encourages them to do. […] women are trying to escape their own freedom to fulfil their own potential in the world, a freedom that they often try to avoid because it is frightening: it demands personal responsibility while offering no guarantee of success or even of well-being
>
> (Tyson 2006: 97)

Beauvoir here indicates many of the same characteristics as in Warner's definition of a crone, as they are both detached from the roles of mother and wife, but here this is seen as a liberating force. If we view Abigail in this way we realise that her leaving her family is in essence a way for her to reclaim her freedom. She has supressed and trapped herself within the patriarchal frameworks as a mother and consequently, when she fails as a mother she needs to find herself again as she feels that her role as a mother does no longer apply. She has distanced herself from her family and thereby removed her title as mother, in an attempt to cope and live with her guilt.

Susie refers to her mother as sometimes being the "mother-stranger" (Sebold 2009: 50). This signals that Susie only knows Abigail as her mother and that this mother-stranger does not fit with how the patriarchal framework depicts mothers. Within the patriarchal ideology, being a mother is Abigail's essence and Susie has never pictured or known her any other way. When Susie notices a stranger in the same form as her mother this evokes an uncanny feeling with Susie, the same as when Red Riding Hood encounters the Wolf dressed as her Grandmother. Susie intuitively understand that there are aspects of her mother which do not fit into the stereotypical role of the *mother* and she realises that there are other facets and a whole life before Abigail was synonymous with mother. In this sense Abigail depict two opposing persona's that cannot coexist. Motherhood is partly a mask for Abigail and she has supressed parts of herself that do not fit in with that role, and the mother-stranger is when she reveals discontent with her role.

Abigail is trying to distinguish herself as a woman from her identity as a mother as Maggie Humm writes, in *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory,* that "[f]eminism distinguishes 'woman' from 'mother' in order to examine the psychological dynamics in our culture that absorbs femininity into maternity" (Humm 1995: 178). This reveals the struggle that Abigail is dealing with and the reason why she is split in two, because the patriarchal ideology does not allow her to be only a woman without the addition of motherhood.

Moreover, those two roles, woman and mother, are no longer compatible for her because of the loss of her child and she must make a choice. When Abigail finally decides to leave her family, it is because she blames herself and considers herself a failure. Susie and her mother here react similar as they both blame themselves for events beyond their control. This also brings us back to *Little Red Riding Hood* neither mother nor daughter is able to prevent the following events form happening. Abigail might also blame herself, similar to the same as Red Riding Hood mother presumably does, because she sent her daughter out into the woods alone, without anyone accompanying her leaving the Wolf, or neighbour, open to fulfil his intentions. This also evokes what we discussed previously, about Eric Berne's reaction to Red Riding Hood's mother who essentially blames the mother for her death and the victims are responsible for the violence of others (qtd in Tatar 1999: 5).

4.5 Jack Salmon.: The Father and the Huntsman. Mr. Harvey: The Wolf and the Predator

What is interesting, within *The Lovely Bones*, as well as in *Little Red Riding Hood*, is that the male characters are trapped by the same patriarchal structure as the female characters, however, not to the same degree. What we discussed in the previous chapter on *Little Red Riding Hood* is that there are two types of stereotypical male characters. The Huntsman portrays the strong and smart saviour while the Wolf is vicious and evil. These types partly coincide with the two male counterparts we will discuss in *The Lovely Bones*. That is Jack, the Huntsman, although Susie's father brings more depth to this character, and Mr. Harvey who is very similar to the Wolf and who only plans for the next victim.

Jack, is portrayed with what patriarchal ideology tells us are feminine attributes. He acts more the role of a mother than a stereotypical patriarch, who leaves the responsibilities of the home and children to the mother. Susie, on the other hand, reveals a desire for her father to act the role of a stereotypical patriarch in order to avenges her death, as that can be considered the norm, the father who avenge his deceased daughter. Susie provides us with an explanation of a patriarchal figurehead, which she explains is "a man violent in rage. That's what you see in movies, that's what happens in the books people read. An everyman takes a gun or knife and stalks the murderer of his family" (Sebold 2009: 65). This reveals Susie's desire for her father

to act the role of the Huntsman, however, this is not the man Jack is. He focuses his attention on what is left, not on what he can never regain. Jack and Abigail are different in this sense, and Susie reflects on their roles as parents and she says that "[s]he [Abigail] was pulling and pulling away – all her energy was against the house, and all his energy was inside it" (Sebold 2002: 181). Abigail is searching for a way out while Jack is focusing his attention on what is left.

At the same time as he has, what society considers feminine traits, he is still by definition, the father and consequently the patriarch of the family. Luce Irigaray notes that:

> the patriarchal order is indeed the one that functions as the *organization and monopolization of private property to the benefit of the head of the family*. It is the proper name, the name of the father, that determines ownership for the family, including the wife and children
>
> (Irigaray 1985: 83)

This quote reveals that the stereotypical patriarch of a family is also categorised as the owner. This emphasises Jack struggles with an ambivalence towards avenge and the mother character he has taken on, as they cannot coincide nor be combined. The patriarchal ideology dictates that he must protect his property, but Jack eventually choses to forgo this stereotype in order to do what he thinks best for his family.

Even though Jack has morphed his character somewhat into a blend between feminine and masculine, his task as a patriarch is to avenge his daughter. Therefore, he displays an ambivalence between avenging his daughter's murder, and to let go and move on with his life, as his feminine and masculine qualities cannot coexist as they reveal two different objectives. He tries to comply with the patriarchal values attributed to his gender, nonetheless he is still incapable of letting go of his feminine attributes and even in his pursuit of the killer he is remorseful towards Susie. Jack writes to Susie in his notebook that "I need to rest, honey. I need to understand how to go after this man. I hope you'll understand" (Sebold 2002: 181). This statement signals the ambivalent struggle to conform with his masculine Huntsman qualities, to avenge and rescue, and the feminine qualities where he is apologetic towards Susie and again feels like he is letting her down by not catching her killer. is his most dominant characteristic.

Mr. Harvey, on the other hand, is to *The Lovely Bones* what the Wolf is in *Little Red Riding Hood.* A striking similarity between the two is, as mentioned above, the fact that Perrault refers to the Wolf as "neighbor wolf" and in his little rhyme at the end refers to "tame" wolves that are not necessarily wolves in the literal sense (Perrault 1999: 12-13). Mr. Harvey is the neighbour Wolf in *The Lovely Bones*, the predator who lives next door, in a house which looks the same as the Salmon family home, but is really a shell that serves as a hiding place and a place where he can secretly observe his victim. The house functions as a mask of normality for Mr. Harvey and is a place where he can hide not only himself but also his victims and trophies. He hides his vicious nature within the house and tries to project a sense of humanity in order to portray himself as a regular, ordinary man. The house carefully conceals what he does not want anyone to find out and Susie says that her parents have accepted him as the ordinary man next door, which is the role he has strived to achieve (cf. Sebold 2002: 6).

This façade of normalcy, combined with the illusion of safety in a suburban neighbourhood, leads us to believe in the security of the neighbourhood. They are also contributing factors to why both Abigail and Jack is left with extreme guilt about not being able to protect their daughter, because they did not realise the danger which, within a patriarchal frame, is their duty. Jack's failure to act the role of the Huntsman, to protect and rescue leaves him with the same sense of guilt as Abigail feels, and failure in playing his role, the patriarch, in his daughter's life. This guilt is magnified when rendered incapable of taking care of their other two children when he is grieving for the one who died. He is also incapable of keeping his wife, as she leaves him in her grief. All of these things are his tasks, to take care of his family, keep them safe and happy.

Jack has built his identity around being a father and family man. Therefore, when he fails and Susie dies, there is nothing left of him. Susie witnesses these moments when mourning creeps in and she explains that:

> [b]efore sleep wore off, he was who he used to be. Then, as his consciousness woke, it was as if poison seeped in. At first he couldn't even get up. […] The guilt on him, the hand of God pressing down on him, saying, *You were not there when your daughter needed you*
>
> (Sebold 2009: 65)

Jack also blames himself, just as Susie does, and Abigail. They all behave like stereotypical victims who place the blame on themselves instead of the perpetrator.

A quote that echoes the entire novel is Mr. Harvey's view on women and children, "[h]e had a moment of clarity about how life should be lived: not as a child or as a woman. They were the two worst things to be" (Sebold 2009: 215-216). This leaves us with a better understanding of why and how Mr. Harvey feels inclined to pursue and act the horrible violent acts that he does. He has placed the role of man and adult above that of woman and child to the point that they become dispensable and worthless, creating a hierarchy of humanity where he has placed himself at the top. Therefore, he can justify his actions, as he believes himself to be more valuable, and he praises himself lucky in life not to be born a woman. He is entitled to take what he wants without needing permission from anyone but himself. This evokes what Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément write about hierarchal binary oppositions and that these binaries are "related to 'the' couple, man/woman" (Cixous and Clément 2008: 64). They further continue that the man is always associated with the active while the woman is associated with the passive, meaning that the female is rendered the lesser of the hierarchal binaries (Cixous and Clément 2008: 64). This hierarchal structure is what Mr. Harvey utilises and has developed to an extreme level in order to justify his actions towards women because he ranks higher than them on every level. Patriarchy has enabled him to expand this hierarchal binary system, which consequently has made him able to act as if a God, who rules over life and death.

Mr. Harvey's views, in addition, echoes what Luce Irigaray writes, that "[t]he 'feminine' is always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy, as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex" (Irigaray 1985: 69). Irigaray's statement on sex and gender mirror those presented to us through *The Lovely Bones,* where the only valid sex is the male sex, which holds monopoly on value and therefore decides and approves all virtues within a patriarchal society. It is the thought of who is valuable and who can value sex that makes Mr. Harvey feel entitled to rape and kill children, or young women, because women and children are not valuable and cannot attribute value to themselves. Only men can attach value, and it is clear that he does not view Susie, or any of his other victims, as valuable enough to save their lives or spare them of the violent acts he enforces on them. Thereby, patriarchy becomes Mr. Harvey's alibi. Mr. Harvey hides within the patriarchal structure as the sovereign male with authority and power to do as he pleases without consequences.

4.6 Conclusion

As we have seen, both in *Little Red Riding Hood* and in *The Lovely Bones* the frameworks of patriarchy binds both women, and to some extent men, within strict social roles. The way that *The Lovely Bones* reveals the patriarchal ideology not only through the female characters but also through the male characters. They do not only apply to the subordination of women but that the problem of gender inequality applies to both sexes and we are reared, from birth, to separate and distinguish between male and female thereby creating, upholding and enforcing the inequality that exists in patriarchy. Therefore, I would agree with that patriarchal ideology is pervasive and "can program us without our knowledge or consent" (Tyson 2006: 89). This signals that the patriarchal ideology is limiting to all human beings as it is fixed within our minds.

The Lovely Bones scrutinises the patriarchal framework in place and challenges its ideology by revealing the use of violence as a means to uphold a patriarchal hierarchy. Violence is an everyday occurrence in society and there are no structures in place strong enough to eliminate or prevent violent acts from happening. Violence becomes a result of inequality and a side effect of patriarchy. Patriarchy is presented as a society that allows predators to go unpunished because of its inherent hierarchy, which values certain members, more than others. This hierarchal structure might not legally allow violence, nonetheless, it stands as incapable of preventing violent crimes from occurring. Which leads some, like Mr. Harvey, to feel entitled and with a knowledge that if one is smart and cunning, like the Wolf, there will be no repercussions for his actions.

In the next chapter, we will discuss Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Here we move to a dystopian society where an ideology has emerged as a contrast to a society that advocated equality. In the fictional society of Gilead, we are introduced to a structure that has placed severe boundaries on its inhabitants to the point where not only certain actions are made illegal, but the ideology overtly attempts to control both men and women's thoughts. *The Handmaid's Tale* has taken the social and implicit patriarchal rules that we have previously discussed in *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Lovely Bones* and turned them into laws, thereby eliminating the chance for the types of mistakes we have previously highlighted. What we focus on and will discuss in the next chapter, is how this kind of society promotes an extreme form of a patriarchal hierarchy and by which means it is able to do so.

Chapter 5: *The Handmaid's Tale.* Questions of Control, Body and Freedom. Does Ideology Condition our Mind and/or Actions?

> I would like to believe this is a story I'm telling. I need to believe it. I must believe it […] It's also a story I'm telling, in my head, as I go along. Tell, rather than write, because I have nothing to write with and writing is in any case forbidden. But if it's my story, even in my head, I must be telling it to someone. You don't tell a story only to yourself. There's always someone else
>
> (Atwood 2005: 49).

5.1 Introduction

The Handmaid's Tale is a dystopian novel that depicts a scenario in the near future where society has dipped "down past the zero line of replacement, and down and down" (Atwood 2005: 123). The population has, because women lose their fertility, dwindled to the point where there is a serious concern whether humanity can survive if not serious measures are taken, which means that the governing élite control every aspect of society, including dominion over minds and bodies of the people of Gilead. In the words of Coral Ann Howells we are presented with a society which is plagued by "widespread environmental catastrophe, high incidences of infertility, the rise of right-wing Christian fundamentalism as a political force, and a deep hostility to the post 1960s feminist movement" (Howells 2006: 162). Gilead is based on an extreme ideological movement who attempts to force humanity to procreate and repopulate.

The Handmaid's Tale can be read, in the words of Sharon Rose Wilson, as a "metafairy tale […] about 'Red Cap' and other fairy tales" (Wilson 1993: 271). Although *The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian novel it shares many of the same elements with fairy tales, especially *Little Red Cap,* but also the likes of *Bluebeard*. We encounter the girl dressed in red who is taken advantage of by the patriarch of society, who shares similarities with both the Wolf and Bluebeard as a predator who harbours dark secrets in locked rooms.

The Handmaid, Offred, provides us with a first person narrative, which exposes and critiques the extreme right-wing Christian patriarchal ideology. Handmaids are the select few women who still are biologically fertile, therefore, their assigned role is to become pregnant and deliver a child to the governing élite. The Handmaids, as well as other social groups, are enslaved solely based on what they can contribute, or what their bodies can provide. Everything and, also everybody is given a purpose, which evokes what Howells states that the novel is a reaction to the "Western trend of mass consumerism which Gilead tried to reverse by its fundamentalist doctrines and its liturgy of 'moral values'" (Howells 2006: 161). Everyone that can serves a purpose must do so in order to benefit society and the greater good. This has given rise to rigid categories that places everyone into a role. These categories render infertile women as unnatural, and the governing élite can thereby, morally and legally, eliminate these women because they do not fit within the frameworks of Gilead's moral values as they cannot serve to benefit society.

The Handmaids are seen to be of utmost importance because of their fertility, which is also why they are stripped of their previous lives and identities. Because of their fertility, they must be forced to conform to their purpose and as a result they are viewed as objects and are only valuable when, and if, they become pregnant. *The Handmaid's Tale* critiques the extreme patriarchal ideology we are presented with, that reveals a society where human rights are violated and, especially women are oppressed to the extent where they are bereaved of control over both their body and their mind (cf. Howells 2006: 163). In this chapter, we will focus on and emphasise how this oppression develops and what implications a fundamentalist regime has on women, and also to some extent men. Furthermore, we will again discuss the implicit patriarchal rules that have here been legalised. By making these rules into laws the governing patriarchy is empowered to enforce the rules that previously were implied but are now part of the fundamental ideology.

Our narrator, Offred, tells her story orally, through the use of cassette tapes, as writing is banned for women (cf. Atwood 2005: 49). However, we are presented with a written text and are warned in the epilogue that the oral version has been transcribed 200 years after the fact. The oral nature of this story evokes back to the tradition of female storytellers who told their life story and experiences to the younger generations, which is exactly what Offred does (cf. Warner 1995: 17). Furthermore, in Gilead, writing is seen as a way of expressing oneself, thinking and display ideas of one's own, which would be inappropriate for women. This is because their assigned social standing does not incorporate any need to be educated, rather the

opposite, the less educated they are the easier they are to assimilate and, consequently control and conform to the new social structure. Therefore, writing is forbidden. The restriction we see here on books and knowledge and that the written word is only allowed the privileged few, enforces patriarchy and its ideology, which indicates that women are not entitled the right to gain any kind of knowledge because that can be harmful and threatening to society. To secure the totalitarian regime all knowledge must be taken from them and they must be silenced.

The ideology supresses knowledge and signals that the written word is dangerous. Offred thinks back, to the beginning stages and remembers that some women burned books (cf. Atwood 2005:48). The idea that knowledge resides in reading and writing is not new and book burning signals the starting point of a new society that is ridding itself of all traces that does not coincide with the new ideology. Knowledge must be restricted to solely be attainable to the governing powerful élite, which is strictly male, and remain inaccessible to the subordinate classes, mainly women, in an attempt to restrain them. Knowledge is power and by restricting reading and writing and, also, the availability of books, is a totalitarian tool.

The restrictive totalitarian structure is built around, as mentioned above, what Howells says are society's moral values. Offred refers to the moral values as, "[a] return to traditional values" (Atwood 2005:17). The notion of traditional values are what Marina Warner notes about the "Christian tradition held the virtues of silence, obedience and discretion as especially, even essentially, feminine. […] The Silent Woman was an accepted ideal" (Warner 1995: 29). Warner is here presenting a feminist reaction to this ideal woman, which is what Offred refers to when she says that the Republic of Gilead have established a return to traditional values. They have essentially reconstructed the silent woman. This structure limits women, to the same extreme that we have discussed in *Little Red Riding Hood* where women are characterised as stupid and incapable of self-sufficiency. Women consequently are tied to the home and a life of domesticity that excludes them from being a part of any political structures or decision-making, which enforces their silence, as it does not allow them to speak their minds or utter any kind of opinion. This notion of traditional values again brings us back to the term discussed throughout this thesis, which is biological essentialism. Here in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the essence of every woman is based on the notion of traditional values, an "unchanging essence" which lies within our biology and which promotes that "women are innately inferior to men" (Tyson 2006: 85). The notion that Gilead has reverted back to traditional values evokes the virtues and morals of the Victorian period, where sex was for procreation only. Women were

not supposed to enjoy sex, they were meant to be frightened and disgusted (cf. Tyson 2006: 90).

In this chapter we will examine how the laws within Gilead affects people's control over their own bodies, but also how such a structure implants ideology within the minds of not only believers but also protesters of the patriarchal hierarchy. We will also, again, explore what Toril Moi refers to as *essentialism* and *biologism*, and how the beliefs in a female essence based on biology, has formed the Republic of Gilead and shaped its traditional and moral values (cf. Moi 1997: 209). We will mainly focus on the female characters as they, because of essentialism/biologism and patriarchal hierarchy experience stricter regulations. Furthermore, we will examine some major social groups, mainly the Handmaids, Wives, Aunts and, also the Commander, with a strong focus on the main characters within these social groups in order to highlight the rules and functions within each hierarchal social class.

5.2 Society

Offred provides her rendition of how personal identity is treated within Gilead and she says:

> I wait. I compose myself. My self is a thing I must now compose, as one composes a speech. What I must present is a made thing. Not something born
>
> (Atwood 2005:76)

This quote gives much information about how society is structured. A self is not something that is allowed to exist and must be hidden away behind a façade, which is acceptable for the patriarchal framework of society. This quote also echoes Simone de Beauvoir famous words, that "[o]ne is not born a woman; one becomes one" (qtd in Tyson 2006:96). Offred must construct a female essence, a mask that is regulated by Gilead and she must abide by the set rules and regulations for women and Handmaids. The notion of one's self is inappropriate because it does not serve a purpose nor does it benefit society, which is why it must be supressed and hidden. Gilead is a totalitarian society where there is no room for those who do not identify with the constructed framework, hence, those who are unable to comply are either killed or sent away to die.

The norm is enforced and regulated by law. In order to repopulate, heterosexuality is a requirement and to be anything else, is considered unconstitutional and illegal. They charge those who do not comply with heterosexuality with "Gender Treachery" (Atwood 2005: 53). Gilead has essentially made homosexuality illegal and punishable by death. Those who commit this crime are executed and displayed on the *Wall*, a seemingly ordinary brick wall where criminals are hung from hooks with bags over their heads making them look like scarecrows, which is exactly what they are (cf. Atwood 2005:41-42).

5.2.1 Ideology

Ideology is, as we have discussed previously, a difficult term to restrict to just one meaning. Nonetheless, one of Terry Eagleton's descriptions is that "[…] ideology has to do with *legitimating* the power of a dominant social group or class" (Eagleton 2007: 5). Gilead has succeeded in this and the dominant social group has legitimated its ideology through suppression of lower classes and women, and constitutionalised rules and regulations in order to maintain their powerful positions. Eagleton further explains that ideological ideas are "what men and women live by, and will occasionally die for" (Eagleton 2007:xxii). Ideas are fundamental and dominant, especially when an idea becomes collective. The ideology we see in Gilead, however, is what men and women live by, but not necessarily, what they will die for, which can be viewed as an ideological flaw. The dominant male social class, seemingly will not die for what they believe in, but they are prepared to kill for their ideological beliefs and, consequently, supress the population in this way rather than being martyrs for their beliefs. Nonetheless, the population at large is not ready to die for the beliefs of the élite in this ideology, and there are underground groups of people who resist the patriarchal order (cf. Atwood 2005: 177). This reveals, what we can arguably conclude, a weak leadership because its patriarchal overheads do not enforce the ideology in the previously mentioned terms presented by Eagleton. On the other hand, Eagleton presents another definition of ideology and notes that is a "socially necessary illusion" (Eagleton 2007: 2). This identifies the weakness in Gilead's ideology, as its illusion is not powerful enough to mesmerize all of its citizens, as revealed in the epilogue through the fact that Gilead saw its downfall shortly after Offred's story was documented.

The Republic of Gilead's ideology can be summarised as a suppressive structure that conceals its inherent sexist values under "a return to traditional values" (Atwood 2005:17).

These traditional values, as we have mentioned, are said to be based on religious beliefs, more specifically, right wing Christian fundamentalist beliefs (cf. Howells 2006: 162). The ideology is based on ideas of sex and gender that follow along the lines of what Toril Moi refers to as "the belief in a given female nature" which "in the end always plays into the hands of those who want women to conform to predefined patterns of femininity" (Moi 1997: 209). The Republic of Gilead makes use of this and lawfully define women and their function according to their female nature of childbearing. Gilead's ideology defines women, in Offred's words, in this way:

> [w]e are for breeding purposes: we aren't concubines, geisha girls, courtesans. On the contrary: everything possible has been done to remove us from that category. […] We are two-legged wombs, that's all: sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices
>
> (Atwood 2005: 146)

Women, who are still fertile, are reduced to vessels, functioning wombs that are legally the élite's property. They are valued solely for their functioning wombs and wear clothes that cover their shape and bodies as they are not to be coveted.

This evokes another view on the ideology of Gilead, which comes from the standpoint of one of the Aunts. These are the women in charge to prepare and instruct the Handmaids on how to perform their duty, and explains the view of women, in pre-Gileadean times, who chose not to have children and she says that "[t]hey were lazy women […] they were sluts" (Atwood 2005:123). This further signals that a woman's task and function is to have children, which is seen as their duty to society. Thereby, it is part of the ideological framework that women who are able to bear children, must do so. Women, who are unlucky enough, in this setting, and are fertile, consequently lose their self, their voice and the control of their bodies. There is no question of personal choice and women's opinions are silenced, suppressed and rendered insignificant.

There are, however, two competing ideologies in this novel. One that is marked by the start of the Republic of Gilead, which we have discussed above, and the other that marks the time before the Republic, which is reminiscent of our present. The pre-Gileadean society is characterised by feminism with a special focus on equality and control over one's own body. Offred sees her mother on a videotape from a demonstration before the republic:

> She's in a group of other women, dressed in the same fashion; she's holding a stick, no, it's part of a banner, the handle. […] TAKE BACK THE NIGHT. […] FREEDOM TO CHOOSE. EVERY BABY A WANTED BABY. RECAPTURE OUR BODIES. DO YOU BELIEVE A WOMAN'S PLACE IS ON THE KITCHEN TABLE?
>
> (Atwood, 2005:129-130)

Offred's mother was a feminist activist. However, the viewing of this video tape is not to promote feminist thinking, but is meant as a warning of what society believes to be dangerous thoughts and actions that threaten the moral and traditional values that Gilead is based upon. These tapes are presented as documentaries and are shown to express how feminism contributes to ruin society and that the Gileadean ideology was a necessity in order to save humanity. The feminist proclamations are about the body and "taking back the body from patriarchy" (Ives 2013: 82). This is exactly the opposite of what Gilead attempts to do, which is to subjugate women and claim their bodies for the benefit of the patriarchal ideology.

These two, pre-Gilead and Gilead portray very different, reactional ideologies, which reflects what Terry Eagleton writes that:

> nobody is, ideologically speaking, a complete dupe that people who are characterised as inferior must actually learn to be so. It is not enough for a woman […] to be defined as a lower form of life; they must be actively *taught* this definition, and some of them prove to be brilliant graduates in this process
>
> (Eagleton 2007:xxiii, xxiv)

Eagleton's point here, applies to that the Handmaids, at the Red Centre, are in the process of being taught this new ideology. The Aunts give examples of feminist activism teaching the Handmaids how destructive this former kind of ideology is and thereby expressing the need for the Republic. Not all the Handmaids, however, are, in Eagleton's words, brilliant graduates. Offred, in this sense, stands as an example of what we discussed in the chapter on *Little Red Riding Hood,* where the protagonist in *The Story of Grandmother*, conforms to the role of female and feminine and then oppose it, to reformulate Irigaray (cf. Irigaray 1985: 76). Offred, similarly, plays the part of a Handmaid as she, seemingly assumes her inferior role, at the same time as she strives to keep her mind free of contamination and later on finds another Handmaid who knows of a whole network of people who resist the constrictive ideology.

5.2.2 Patriarchy

The Handmaid's Tale portrays, as we have seen, a rigid patriarchal ideology. The ideas of patriarchy is that is "[a] system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions" (Humm 1995: 200). This is accompanied by specific rules for women that have been discussed throughout this thesis, which states that women must adhere to the given patriarchal rules in order not to be subjected to rape, violence or, as in *The Handmaid's Tale*, death. These rules are explicitly stated here in *The Handmaid's Tale*. This somewhat coincides with our previous discussion in the chapter on *Little Red Riding Hood*, where these rules are implied and suggested by society, or as in *Little Red Cap,* clearly stated by a parent. They are, however, never constitutionalised as they are here in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Nonetheless, Offglen also provides the implicit rules that she had to adhere to before Gilead and she remembers back and explains:

> I remember the rules, rules that were never spelled out but that every woman knew: don't open the door to a stranger, even if he says he is the police. Make him slide his ID under the door. Don't stop on the road to help a motorist pretending to be in trouble. Keep the locks on and keep going. If anyone whistles, don't turn to look. Don't go into a laundromat, by yourself, at night
>
> (Atwood 2005: 34)

This list could have been a great deal longer, and this quote also links us back to the previous chapters on *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Lovely Bones*. We have discussed that both Red Riding Hood and Susie have encountered these rules and, consequently, failed to adhere to them and as a result have been raped and/or died. Toril Moi reflects on patriarchy and describes that "patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards" (Moi 1997:209). The social standards that Moi refers to can also be linked to the underlying patriarchal rules. In *The Handmaid's Tale* women are restrained by the same rules, albeit to a more forceful degree.

My claim in the previous chapters has been that these implicit rules are an integrated part of patriarchy. These rules are enforced because they are internalised by the citizens. Because of the inherent patriarchal structure, we might assume that these internalised rules still apply, and I would argue that they do, albeit in an even more extreme shape. The implied, pre-Gilead, rules discussed above are no longer implicit as they have been legalised and thereby impossible to break. Consequently, the scenario we see in both *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Lovely Bones*, where they both are raped and killed for walking outside the path, taking a

shortcut and talking to strangers, can never be reality in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Women do not, for instance, have the opportunity to go into the laundromat, by themselves, at night, because they can only leave the house at specific times, for specific errands, and always appear publicly in pairs, as Offred says, "[d]oubled, I walk the street" (Atwood 2005: 33).

The fact that women always appear in twos in public does not mean that rape has been eliminated in Gilead. We could argue that the job the Handmaids do for the Commanders' families, both the act of having sex with the Commander and carrying his child, is non-consensual. However, Offred does not seem to categorise this as rape, as she says, "[n]or does rape cover it: nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for. There wasn't a lot of choice but there was some, and this is what I chose" (Atwood 2005: 105). Offred talks of consent but that is, as she herself admits, purely because of a lack of another alternative, which consequently means that there is no choice. Nonetheless, the discussion of rape becomes difficult because Offred herself, the victim, does not categorise the act as rape or herself as a victim. Feminist theory "defines rape as an act *and* a social institution which perpetuate patriarchal domination which are based *on* violence, rather than specifically as a *crime of* violence" (Humm 1995: 234). We could argue, as Offred states, that rape does not occur, however, from this definition of rape as an act and social institution we could dispute her conclusion and include that rape can and does occur through coercion and threats and the fact that it is part of the constitution. Furthermore, this evokes Susan Brownmiller who believes that "sexual violence against women is not only culturally condoned and pervasive but that rape is a primary means by which some men establish their 'manhood'. Rape is the secret of patriarchy" and that "rape culture and the ideology of rape are socially produced" (Humm 1995: 28). The Wolf and Mr. Harvey are a part of this rape culture as they establish their manhood through rape and violence against women, and this is also the case here in *The Handmaid's* Tale. This is enforced even further through the Handmaid's medical examinations.

The question of rape is also relevant during the medical examination, where the doctors take advantage of their position. They disguise it as if they provide a service to the Handmaids who have not become pregnant, because the outcome for Handmaids who prove to be useless and infertile are that they will be sent to the Colonies. This enforces that this is part of the society's structure and that rape is approved by the frameworks of Gilead. The medical examinations are also one of the few instances where the handmaids are alone and not in their usual twos, as Offred says "[n]o twin went with me; on these occasions I'm solitaire" and the vulnerability of the women in these situations is emphasised when we are told that "evidence

from a single woman is no longer admissible" (Atwood 2005: 69, 43). From this we surmise that if something were to happen, the woman in these situations would not be able to defend herself as her voice is irrelevant. This again enforces that the rules and regulations we see in Gilead are similar to the implicit rules discussed in the previous chapters, which functions as tools to silence women. We also see that threat and coercion are contributing factors of rape as they are alone and vulnerable in these situations and Offred therefore thinks that she "must leave the impression that" she is "not offended, that" she is "open to suggestion. […] this is not the last word as far as he's concerned" (Atwood 2005:71). It is clear that the doctor tries to force himself on Offred and since medical examinations are mandatory for Handmaids, he will have the chance to fulfil his desires (cf. Atwood 2005:69).

The authority of the doctors is powerful, and Offred knows this, thinking:

> [h]e could fake the tests, report me for cancer, for infertility, have me shipped off to the Colonies, with the Unwomen. None of this has been said, but the knowledge of his power hangs nevertheless in the air as he pats my thigh, withdraws himself behind the hanging sheet. 'Next month,' he says
>
> (Atwood 2005: 71)

This signals that this overlying threat means that his power and control over her body is ever present. As a man and a medical professional he is placed in an immense powerful position within this ideology. He objectifies women and "deals with a torso only" as there is a "sheet, suspended from the ceiling" so that he "will never see" her "face" (Atwood 2005: 70). The doctor and consequently society at large has a misogynistic view of women, which emphasises the view that is still in place in this society, that is, that women are sexually objectified, which justifies the oppression of women. Furthermore Offred's view on rape and choice is emphasised in the way that women in pre-Gilead are portrayed in the words of Aunt Lydia:

> The spectacles women used to make of themselves. Oiling themselves like roast meat on a spit, and bare backs and shoulders, on the street, in public, and legs, not even stockings on them, no wonder those things used to happen. *Things*, the word she used when whatever it stood for was too distasteful or filthy or horrible to pass her lips. A successful life for her was one that avoided *things*, excluded *things*. Such *things* do not happen to nice women
>
> (Atwood 2005: 65)

This signals what we have discussed throughout this thesis, that women who are subject to rape are themselves blamed for the violence acted upon them. In addition, the notion that nice girls are not subjected to these horrifying acts emphasises the virtues that women must abide by and consequently follow the patriarchal rules. Nevertheless, the notion that these *things* do not happen to nice girls is not what our discussion has revealed. Both Red Riding Hood and Susie were nice and polite when they encountered the Wolf and Mr. Harvey, which lead to their rape and murder. We could argue that if they had been dismissive and rude, that might have saved them, consequently, to be nice is seen as flirting and leading men on, which again direct us towards that nice girls/women are portrayed as asking for it.

5.3 Matriarchy

As an opposition to the patriarchal structure there seems to be is a matriarchy within the boundaries of this patriarchy. A feminist definition of *matriarchy* sees it as a:

> form of society in which mothers are leaders and operate a women's descent line. Ideologically a matriarchy assumes that the power of maternal energy and mother love is a socially cohesive force
>
> (Humm 1995: 165)

The idea of motherly love as a cohesive force almost sound utopian and this is not the kind of matriarchy we are presented with in this novel. Toril Moi also observes that, "[u]topian thought has always been a source of inspiration for feminists" which echoes Humm's feminist definition of matriarchy (qtd in Tyson 2006: 101).

The Handmaid's Tale on the other hand is quite the opposite. Here, a destructive force governs society where women use the power that they have to oppress each other, where the hierarchal structure encourages some to be and feel superior over others, and where violence and degradation are approved in order to maintain the existing ideology. As Offred notes "the transgression of women in the household, whether Martha or Handmaid, are supposed to be under the jurisdiction of the Wives alone" and that "[t]hey can hit us, there's a scriptural precedent. But not with any implement. Only with their hands" (Atwood 2005: 170, 26). This

further signals that this is an extreme hierarchal structure, which does not coincide with a matriarchy, but hides behind the term in order to convince its subject of the governing ideology. This given definition of matriarchy echoes what Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément argues is an answer to the oppressive patriarchal structure. They state that women must not follow in the patriarchal training as they must develop their own kind of language through writing which she calls *écriture feminine* (feminine writing) in order to oppose the patriarchal frameworks in place (cf. Tyson 2006: 100-101). This also coincides with what Luce Irigaray states that women must adopt and develop "nonpatriarchal ways of thinking and speaking" which she calls *womanspeak* (Tyson 2006: 102). This is essentially, what Offred does as she tells her story, although, both feminine writing and womanspeak would have been impossible in Gilead, therefore, the story is documented in retrospect.

The matriarchal façade we are presented with in this novel is a vicious one where there is a firm sense of hierarchy between women and all women are bound to their factions within the regulations of this society. The Wives, we can argue are the most liberated women, and have some sense of freedom when it comes to what they can do, who they can talk to, and they can also use violence against other groups of women. The Aunts have more restricted positions, but also hold powerful positions in the society in addition to controlling the Handmaids. The Handmaids are the most imprisoned. They are ruled by other women, as well as by society at large. They are told how to dress, how to act, how to behave and are essentially oppressed from all angles of patriarchy and the illusion of matriarchy. Offred explains her view on matriarchy as she says: "[y]ou wanted a women's culture. Well, now there is one. It isn't what you meant, but it exists" (Attwood 2005: 137). This illusion of matriarchy and the way women within treat each other echoes Marina Warner's thoughts in *From the Beast to the Blonde* where she writes that within fairy tales there is a "painful rivalry and hatred between women" (Warner 1995: XX). This further links *The Handmaid's Tale* and the ideology within to written fairy tales as the female characters oppress and hate each other, which again stands as a tool to uphold the patriarchal structure.

This type of matriarchy is not the utopian society that feminist theory and Offred's feminist mother envisioned. Rather its hierarchal structure has turned on itself. We see that a system that divides women into these specific roles tend to resent one another, either for ideological reasons, or out of envy and resentment. This hatred ends up reinforcing the patriarchal structure instead of standing as an opposition, because the women in this novel are the ones who stands as oppressors, towards other women. Therefore, the matriarchy we are

presented with is an illusion created within patriarchy. These two ideological frameworks are incompatible and the dominant patriarchy is always active and conceals its values within the false matriarchy.

5.4 Women/Unwomen

As signalled above, the women in *The Handmaid's Tale* are divided and segregated into female social groups. They are divided depending on their function in society. There is a rigid hierarchy, as we have mentioned earlier, where all citizens must be assigned to a social group however, not all women serve a function and purpose. These women struggle to conform to the rigid framework or openly resist Gilead's values and laws. These women are categorised as Unwomen, which oppresses and degrades them even further as they are regarded as unnatural and sexless. Hence, because they stand in opposition to the government they are illegitimate and illegal. Unwomen are sent to the Colonies, which is a place where they send women, and men, who are incapable of adapting to the social structure (cf. Atwood 2005: 20). Or they are hung on the Wall, like scarecrows (cf. Atwood 2005: 41-42).

The Unwomen are portrayed as being barren, educated, or in opposition to the governing ideology. The authorities view the Unwomen as dangerous to their society and ideology because they do not enforce the patriarchal structure thereby threatening the values as they defy society. To place women in this category the authorities degrade them to the point of dehumanising them and consequently try to rid themselves of them, both in name and physically removing them from society. The authorities fear these women because they represent the old pre-Gilead ideology, which the new Republic tries to distance themselves from. Unwomen represent freedom, and opposes essentialism and refuse to be diminished, to be identified solely based on function and biology.

The governing powers use scare tactics in order to maintain order. Some women simply disappear overnight, they are sent to the Colonies, while others are displayed on a Wall, hanged from hooks, dead. They are a message to all, not to disobey, and people are meant to see them, hence, they are obligated to walk past them and acknowledge that they understand (cf. Atwood 2005: 41-42).

Another way the authorities try to suppress ideas from the old ideology is to present views of how women were treated before Gilead. The Aunts show degrading forms of pornography and tell the Handmaids that that was reality for all women before they were liberated by the republic (cf. Atwood 2005: 128-129). Hence, they should be grateful for their current, and very important positions. This depicts ideology, as mentioned before, which Terry Eagleton refers to as a "socially necessary illusion" (Eagleton 2007: 2). Essentially all women in pre-Gileadean existence are categorised as Unwomen because of their freedom, and therefore the authorities must mask them under this necessary illusion to instil fear within the factions of women. The label Unwomen becomes mythical because to take away women's biological identity is not something that can be removed or revoked. The fact that there are two categories for women in Gilead indicates that the characteristics for women are severely rigid and narrow. To remain within the label woman in Gilead evokes the Victorian notion of the "angel in the house" (Tyson 2005: 90). Lois Tyson explains that to be placed on this "angel in the house" pedestal, leaves women trapped and their single purpose is to abide by the virtues, which are to be "modest, unassuming, self-sacrificing, and nurturing" (Tyson 2005: 90). Furthermore, Lois Tyson explains these virtues indicates that "the 'good girl' had to remain uninterested in sexual activity, except for the purpose of legitimate procreation, because it was believed unnatural for women to have sexual desire" (Tyson 2005: 90). This signals that the women in Gilead, who are unable to be the angel in the house, are labelled Unwomen, and that society is trying to unmake these women and by ridding society of all Unwomen they do not really exist within Gilead. The prefix "un" refers to being the opposite of, therefore the word Unwomen attempts to undo them as women and render as less valuable or inhuman (OALD 2008: 1658). The Unwomen consequently are a necessary illusion as they are in fact women but can never be categorised as such, because they have proven impossible to conform to the rigid virtues and rules that all women must abide by.

5.4.1 Mothers

Motherhood in *The Handmaid's Tale* is seen as the ultimate role for women. From a feminist perspective we clearly "distinguish 'woman' from 'mother'" (Humm 1995: 178). To be a woman is not synonymous with being a mother, which coincides with the differentiation that Humm gives. But these two categories are not the same in Gilead, because one women is not

both pregnant and a mother. In Humm's definition pregnancy is equivalent to motherhood, and from a feminist perspective to be a mother should be a personal choice. When it comes to being mothers, having and/or bearing children is not a personal choice and the women in *The Handmaid's Tale* are not in control over their own bodies. They have essentially outsourced the biological complications to women who still have the ability to do so. Therefore, the role of mother and pregnancy have been separated and bear no connection to one another. The role as a mother is only awarded to the high ranking women in this society and they are all barren. We see here that essentialism as Toril Moi discusses becomes clearly distinguished by biologism. Handmaids serve the purpose of biologism, that their "essence is biological given" while the Wives serve the purpose of essentialism, "the belief in a given female nature" (Moi 1997: 209). This means that the essence linked to the Handmaids are strictly biological, in the sense that they are female, while the essence linked to the Wives is that they are feminine, "[a] set of culturally defined characteristics" that determine that they have the ability to be good mothers (Moi 1997: 209). This reveals a deeper segregation for women and that they are solely given one purpose, which is another patriarchal structure created in order to subdue and control the women in this novel, and limit them to one task.

5.4.2 The Handmaids

The Handmaid's function is, as mentioned, that of a "female role as a child breeder" (Howells 2006: 165). Offred says "we prayed for […] emptiness, so we would be worthy to be filled: with grace, with love, with self-denial, semen and babies" (Atwood 2005: 204). This quote echoes the idea of women that is present throughout the novel that they are supposed to be empty vessels, human incubators for the élite. The Handmaids are bereaved of personality and a sense of self. This is emphasised as Offred says, "[t]here's hardly any point in my thinking, is there? […] What I think doesn't matter" (Atwood 2005: 222).

To emphasise the suppression of self, the Handmaids are stripped of their given names when they enter into their assigned roles and receive new names that signal their standing. The epilogue reveals that their names were "a patronymic, composed of the possessive preposition and the first name of the gentleman in question" (Atwood 2005: 318). Therefore, we can assume that Offred's owner is named Fred, hence, "of Fred". In addition, these names change as they were given to them as they entered the house of a Commander and his family, and consequently

taken away upon leaving it. (cf. Atwood 2005: 318). Their new roles and new names also go hand in hand with a colour, and the Handmaids are always dressed in red, from top to toe. We recognise the red colour symbolism from *Little Red Riding* Hood, which we discussed in chapter 3, where the colour red signalled both danger and seduction. This signals that there are only two sides to every women. On the one hand red is inviting and seductive, on the other hand is dangerous and, here, is also signals the forbidden, in the sense that the Handmaids belong to and are owned by one man. The Handmaids are certainly censored and forbidden in the way that their clothes cover their entire bodies in order to not reveal, display, provoke or entice. In addition, their clothes signals that they have been trained and follow the structure as Offred notes that "[y]ou can think clearly only with your clothes on" (Atwood 2005: 153). This indicates that the Handmaids have been taught that they need to cover their bodies and even though Offred often speaks against the governing ideology, the ideas that are distinct to Gilead have manifested themselves within Offred's mind without her being aware.

This furthers the notion that women in this society are treated as objects. Women have a function and are exploited to the fullest extent for their fertility. Interestingly, this brings up the dilemma and discussion about who has the power to control over women's bodies. This evokes Cixous' and Clément's statement that "[s]ubordination of the feminine to the masculine order […] gives the appearance of being condition for the machinery's function (Cixous and Clément 2008: 65). This signals that the subordination of women is a necessary patriarchal tool in order for the structure to remain in balance. The notion that The Handmaids are not in control over their bodies is emphasised in that they are not allowed to keep their babies and they are only allowed to "[…] nurse the babe, for a few months" for health reasons, as the governing authorities, "believe in mother's milk" (Atwood 2005: 137). This refers solely to a biological need towards the baby, as the function of taking care and raising the child has now moved on to another female role, the Wives.

The Handmaids have no authority over their body and what is being done to it. This is clearly a consequence of the patriarchal structure, something that is also taken up by Luce Irigaray, mentioned previously, that patriarchy deems the husband and father as having ownership over the household, his wife and children (cf. Irigaray 1985: 83). What Irigaray says here is that property also includes the wife and children, female servants, and even to some extent, male servants, and is not limited to inanimate objects. Therefore the patriarchal structure reveals that the Handmaids have no say in where they are, who they are with, when they have sex and with whom, if they want to become pregnant and whether or not to have a child.

Everything that concerns the female body is under the control of the upper male élite, the Commanders, and the ideological structure that controls this society.

There is an imbalance here that states that flaws cannot lie with the superior male and must therefore be with the inferior female. Consequently, the Handmaids are blamed if they do not become pregnant, even though several different Handmaids have come and gone, the suspicion that the problem with conceiving might be with the man can never uttered aloud. That is because "[t]here is no such thing as a sterile man any more, not officially. There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren, that's the law" (Atwood 2005: 70-71). The word *sterile* in itself is forbidden (cf. Atwood 2005: 70). This just proves the focus this society has of a perfect man and the imperfect woman. The laws against words that can have a negative connotation against a man at the same time the society uses words such as Unwoman, illustrates the oppression women are under. This imbalance saturates Gilead and there is no escaping it, it is the law. Nonetheless, the women discuss sterility as a possibility but this is kept secret and they try to move around this problem and become pregnant by another man because they will be blamed if they do not become pregnant. We have also discussed that doctors often take advantage of these scenarios where the Handmaids have gone for some time without becoming pregnant and that this, seemingly is a normal practice (cf. Atwood 2005: 71). There is an understanding here that the problem can come from the male side, but this is unspeakable and the fault outwards in society must always be with the woman or else the man would seem weak, which is not an option.

Furthermore, Offred is also stripped of her family as she is captured and indoctrinated into the Republic of Gilead. The epilogue reveals that:

> [t]he regime created an instant pool of such women [Handmaids] by the simplest tactic of declaring all second marriages and non-marital liaisons adulterous, arresting the female partners, and, on the grounds that they were morally unfit, confiscated the children they already had, who were adopted by the childless couples of the upper echelons who were eager for progeny by any means
>
> (Atwood 2005: 316)

Offred throughout wonders where her daughter and husband are and what happened to them but she stands helpless without means to gain this knowledge, as she has been deemed unfit to raise a child or marry.

We see that Offred has nothing that is her own, not even her own family. However, there is one thing she *calls* her own, which is her room: "MY room, then. There has to be some space, finally, that I claim as mine, even in this time" (Atwood 2005: 60). Offred desperately searches for something to claim for her own as she refuses to acknowledge the extent of her situation. The room that she refers to is in the Commander's house, and it is only hers during the time that she is there and can be useful. The room is allotted to her because she is a Handmaid, which means that the room has belonged to several other women, before the current Offred. That other women have come and gone from this room, combined with Offred herself discussing suicide, leaves us with a macabre sensation, which echoes back to the fairy tale, *Bluebeard*, where there is a locked room with the remnants of his dead wives (cf. Perrault 1999: 145-146). This also indicates that this room is not for Offred to claim and that she stands as a possible remnant for the next Handmaid in line to ponder about. Offred, however, finds solace in the clues and echoes left behind by the other occupants (cf. Atwood 2005: 62). One in particular is a pseudo-Latin phrase she finds written as she examines the cupboard where it is written, "*Nolite te bastardes carborundorum*" (Atwood 2005: 62). The actual meaning is irrelevant because this serves as a reminder to Offred that she is not alone and this serves as a message to her from someone, like her (cf. Atwood 2005: 62-63).

We understand that Offred has an attachment to this room and it is essentially more private than her own body. Offred speaks about one occasion when she thinks the Commander is entering her room and says, "what the hell does he think he's doing? Nobody else has seen him. I hope. Was he invading? Was he in my room? I called it *mine*" (Atwood 2005: 59). Offred reacts more to the Commander being in her room than she does when he is invading her body. She has claimed the room for her own and to invade her room is a bigger violation than having sex with him. She values the sanctity of her room more than she does her body because she has admitted defeat in regards to her body as she realises that she has no control and no way of regaining control but she still feels in control of her room.

Even though Offred calls this room "mine" she knows that in fact it is not, but certain customs are in place that she appreciates. Offred tells us of a time when:

> Cora brings my supper, covered, on a tray. She knocks at the door before entering. I like her for that. It means she thinks I have some of what we used to call privacy left
>
> (Atwood 2005: 75)

Here we see that some customs have managed to linger in the new Republic so even though she has no privacy, the illusion is still there.

Offred does in fact not have a room, which, according to Virginia Woolf, is fundamental for every woman. As Woolf famously writes, "a woman must have money and a room of her own" (Woolf 2000: 6). Woolf is in her essay speaking of female authors but it does apply to all women that in order to have freedom, money and independence are pinnacle, furthermore she needs a private room she claim as her own personal space. This is what Offred lacks, on both accounts, which again coincides with what we have mentioned earlier that Gilead is rooted in *traditional values*, meaning that there is a tradition of suppressing women in this way, by not allowing her the freedom of self-sufficiency and personal space. The frameworks of society is rigid to the point that Offred knows that it is an illusion but desperately clings to this idea of having something she can claim as hers. The Commander, on the other hand has a room which is his own, with a lock and key to the knowledge and treasures hidden inside, the same way as Serena Joy has her space, her garden that she claims as solely her own. This shows us that the Handmaid's and the servants are the only members of society that has been completely deprived of their freedom and do not have what Woolf sees as the necessary tools to freedom, a room of one's own.

Her thoughts are important, especially to us as readers because she narrates the story from her mind and she wants to claim her mind as her own. Her thoughts, however, betray her and she is gradually being indoctrinated and accustomed to the new ideology, both consciously and unconsciously. We see examples where the ideology of Gilead has taken root in her thoughts, without her being aware of it, which proves that even her mind and thoughts are not completely under her control;

> They seemed undressed. It has taken so little time to change our minds, about things like this. Then I think: I used to dress like that. That was freedom
>
> (Atwood 2005: 38)

This reveals that she is also aware of that she cannot claim her mind as her own and the notion that women have to cover up has been programmed in her mind, by society, and she has become accustomed to it without being aware. Thoughts like this make her question herself and reveals that she is not in complete control of her mind. Ideas and thoughts provided by the ideology in Gilead has at some points taken a foothold in her mind and she does not realise it before she is confronted with the opposite. We are again presented with what Terry Eagleton proposes with

"[…] ideology as illusion, distortion and mystification" (Eagleton 2007: 3). Here we see how the ideology has distorted Offred's own thoughts by shrouding it in mystery and illusion, thereby, slowly turning her thoughts into those of the ideology in place.

5.4.3 The Wives

The Wives' designated colour is blue which is described in the *Symbols* dictionary to be "an accumulation of emptiness" (*Symbols*: 102-103). This emptiness signals that the Wives are unable to become pregnant and hence, their wombs are empty. Therefore, the Wives lack a purpose within this extreme patriarchal ideology and, consequently have all fallen into the role as socialites as it is the only possible outcome that is deemed acceptable. They are portrayed as part of the élite and are similar to Victorian upper class women who were expected to keep a household without actually doing the work.

The most notable Wife in the novel is Serena Joy. In her former life she was a singer who appeared on television and later became politically involved and advocated and spoke about "the sanctity of the home, about how women should stay home" (Attwood 2005: 26, 55). She once was an independent woman, a celebrity of sorts, who had the freedom to decide over her own life, ironically, at the same time as she spoke out against what she herself did, against women's rights, which she herself lived. Now, on the other hand, she is forced to abide by the rules she herself advocated:

> [s]he doesn't make speeches any more. She has become speechless. She stays in her home, but it doesn't seem to agree with her. How furious she must be, now that she's been taken at her word
>
> (Atwood 2005: 56)

The life as a Wife has silenced and imprisoned her, in her marriage, in her own home, and as a woman. The values she once spoke of seem harder to live by than to talk about and now when she is forced into this kind of life she resents it for its limiting aspects.

Furthermore, she is unable to perform the one task she, as a woman and wife, is expected to do, that is to bear children. Therefore, the Wives are referred to as "defeated women. They have been unable…" (Attwood 2005: 56). They do not inhabit the biological ability to bear

children, however, they have not been rendered Unwomen and they are celebrated for their inherent role as mothers, which notes that they still hold an important position within society. With this we see the importance society places on women in the élite, and their ability to raise children in accordance with the patriarchal ideology. These are the women selected to further and implement the ideology with the children, therefore the Wives are particularly selected for their views, as we have seen examples of, with Serena Joy and her campaign for traditional values and that women should stay in the home, she is an excellent candidate to further this new ideology.

Serena longs to be a mother and have a child of her own, however, we do not know if she is simply following her set function or if this is a personal desire. She and her husband have tried with several different Handmaids without any luck. Offred notes that Serena spends much time in the garden, tending to her flowers. It is as if she is trying to adopt the fruitfulness of the garden onto herself, searching for answers to why she is barren in the bounty of the garden. She is in essence trying to reclaim her own womanhood through the garden as she is able to make something grow. However, the garden proves to be equally empty. "The tulips along the border are redder than ever, opening, no longer winecups but chalices; thrusting themselves up, to what end? They are, after all, empty" (Attwood 2005: 55). The flowers have grown but they are empty, just like Serena, with no seeds or any chance to reproduce, without the aid of someone else. In addition, the garden represents Serena's only personal space, as we have mentioned earlier in this chapter. This is the only room she can call her own and has complete control over, which also emphasises that she is part of the élite as opposed to the Handmaids who have no room of their own. But, according to Virginia Woolf as discussed above, Serena does still not have money in order to be self-sufficient, therefore, she is still without her freedom.

5.4.4 The Aunts

The Aunts are the women who have the immensely important task to train and educate the Handmaids and teach them both their place within the patriarchal ideology and how to act as proper Handmaids. Thereby, they are given high authoritative positions. They stand as the upholders of, what seems like a matriarchal structure that we are presented with in the Red Centre, and thereby, also the patriarchal structure. They are portrayed as relentless believers in the ideology and will do anything to uphold it. The Aunts are the only group that there are no

examples of nonbelievers or anyone who secretly dislikes the ideology. As mentioned previously, Terry Eagleton notes that ideology can be "illusion, distortion and mystification", and the Aunts seemingly are under the illusion that the ideology of Gilead in absolute truth, and they consequently stand as enforcers of the governing ideas, virtues and values (Eagleton 2007: 3).

Aunt Lydia has become a true believer in Gilead's ideology and she says, "[t]he Republic of Gilead […] knows no bounds. Gilead is within you" (Atwood 2005: 33). This statement tells us that she does not distinguish between her own thoughts and ideas from those of Gilead and she has been "*wholly* mystified" and is "the victim of ideological delusion" (Eagleton 2007: xxiii). She is in fact an upholder of this oppressive patriarchal order but because she is a victim of the governing ideological illusion, she firmly believes that she is helping other women and she says "[w]hat we're aiming for […] is a spirit of camaraderie among women" (Atwood 2005: 234). This tells us that she herself believes to be an advocate for a community, of and for women, while she, and the other Aunts, in reality stand as oppressors of women who enforce and uphold the patriarchal values.

Aunt Lydia has placed her faith in Gilead and has little positive to say about society before The Republic. She believes that "[w]e were a society dying […] of too much choice" (Atwood 2005: 35). She is here referring to the freedom that especially women had in the old society. Where they could wear what they wanted, go where they wanted, have children if they wanted and most importantly, not have children if that was their choice. She believes that such traits are wicked and that these women were lazy sluts (cf. Atwood 2005: 123).

The notion of choice is a dangerous factor in Gilead, similar to what we have discussed in the previous chapters about *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Lovely Bones.* We were there presented with women, or girls, who had the illusion of freedom and, consequently the opportunity to stray from the path and act in manners that conflict with the implicit rules. Nonetheless, we have seen that even though the governing structure is not as rigid as it is in Gilead, to break these rules have severe consequences that does not bode well for the victim, which tells us that the implicit rules are not as implicit as they seem and are in fact depriving women of their freedom. These rules are what the ideology of Gilead bases its values on, hence, they emphasise the dangers of this kind of illusion of freedom.

5.5 Men

The male characters in *The Handmaid's Tale* evokes our chapter on fairy tales. The Commander resembles and echoes the Wolf in *Little Red Cap,* and in turn also Mr. Harvey in *The Lovely Bones*, as their intentions are similar in the way they objectify and portray sexual desires towards their female counterparts, and will, by any means necessary, obtain their goal. While the Wolf and Mr. Harvey simply takes what they desire, the Commander portrays more cunning ways, as he is part of the élite he can, as we have also discussed with the scenario where Offred is coerced during the medical examination, because of his male authority domineer her into submission. Therefore, there is in *The Handmaid's Tale* few cases of violence in this perspective of rape and sex, which has been replaced with psychological suppression and tyranny. Nick, on the other hand, acts much like the Huntsman in *Little Red Cap* as he tries to save Offred and smuggles her out of Gilead. If it is successful or not is unclear and left without a conclusion.

Therefore, in this discussion it is also important to note that men are also trapped within the patriarchal ideology. This echoes what we have discussed in previous chapters, which have revealed patriarchal male stereotypes, and in *The Handmaid's Tale* are no different. We are again presented with male characters that must uphold and present themselves as masculine, either saviours, as we see examples of with Nick/Huntsman as he tries to rescue Offred, or the Wolf/Commander as he tries to fulfil his sexual desires. Aunt Lydia describes that "[m]en are sex machines […] and not much more. They only want one thing" (Atwood 2005: 153). This signals the single sided view we are presented with, which in turn is why they often are portrayed as sexual predators who cannot control themselves. Nonetheless, the male figures are, in all the texts discussed throughout this thesis, the ones with the power to decide over their own fate and consequently have the freedom to act and do as they wish.

The Commander is the character who is given the most privacy. He has his own room, which is locked at all times, as we have mentioned earlier. This stands in complete opposition to the female characters, as discussed above, that Offred has no room or space to claim as her own and Serena who has somewhat created the garden as her space but she cannot physically claim a room because of her gender. The room contains knowledge that is not only forbidden for women or the lower classes it also contain knowledge that is banned by the governing ideology:

> all around the walls there are bookcases. They're filled with books. Books and books and books, right out in plain view, no locks, no boxes. No wonder we can't come in here. It's an oasis of the forbidden. I try not to stare
>
> (Atwood 2005: 147)

Here we again see how restrictive this ideology is about knowledge and who has the right to obtain knowledge. Thereby, to bring Offred, who is forbidden to gain this knowledge, into this room the Commander is showing off his status and social standing as he parades and shows off his locked room as an example of what he has and what she can never have again. He is the only person who has the combination and he decides if others are allowed. This room, in addition to Offred's room as previously discussed, echoes back to Bluebeard's locked room where he kept all his secrets from his past exactly like the Commander does in his room (cf. Perrault 1999: 144-148). This places the Commander in a long line, and tradition, of men allowed to keep their secrets and privacy in locked rooms, while women are never allowed this kind of privacy. The combination of the wealth within the room and the personal space it represents is important because it signals the ordinary and normal objects that we, and pre-Gilead, take for granted but have been in this novel easily taken away.

The Commander's room leaves Offred conflicted as she experiences a false sense of privilege. She is allowed to read and write through a trivial game of scrabble and she calls it freedom (cf. Atwood 2005: 149). However, there in reality is no freedom, and Offred knows this. It is a room that she, exactly like Bluebeard's wife, is forbidden to enter (cf. Perrault 1999: 144-148). This room, with all its confined knowledge and her feelings of freedom, seems cunningly manipulated in order for the Commander to turn Offred more into a concubine, to serve his own desires, rather than the Handmaid she is and Offred later realises that he has in fact changed her role and she say "I'm his mistress" (Atwood 2005: 172).

The illusion of freedom is enforced even further when it is revealed to us that there is a special club for the high ranking men where they can revert to the old world, "[i]t's like walking into the past" (Atwood 2005: 247). It is here that Offred sees other women. These women do not really exist as their very existence revokes the ideology in place at the same time as the men who enforce the ideology protect them. These women were the ones that were unable to conform and fit within the frameworks of Gilead and therefore serve a different function in the margins of this society. This also means that some Unwomen, presumably the ones considered to be beautiful and appealing, are not sent to the Colonies or hung on the Wall as they are forced

to work in these clubs, essentially as prostitutes. The Commander explains that "some of them are real pros. Working girls […] most of them prefer it here" (Atwood 2005: 249). While others are a collection of educated women, lawyers, sociologist and businesswomen who proved difficult or impossible to assimilate (cf. Atwood 2005: 249). The Commander's belief that they prefer this life to the regime of the Republic is an assumption he has made because he believes they enjoy the taste of the old world over the reality of the new one, as he does. However, they serve as prostitutes and are equally bound by fear of the Colonies or death as the women who live within the boundaries of Gilead. Therefore, these women are very much alike the Handmaids in the way that they are both essentially prostitutes. This tells us that even though it was illegal in the old world, and in the new republic, the oldest profession in the world still exists, and consequently the objectification of women is still as strong, if not stronger, in Gilead, where women are treated as personal property.

This notion, nonetheless seems to be lost on the Commander. Offred reveals a conversation they had:

> On the fourth evening he gave me the hand lotion […] The trouble is, I said, I don't have anywhere to keep it. In your room, he said, as if it were obvious. They'd find it, I said. Someone would find it. Why? he asked, as if he really didn't know. […] It wasn't the first time he gave evidence of being truly ignorant of the real conditions under which we lived. They look, I said. They look in all our rooms. What for? he said. I think I lost control then, a little. Razor blades, I said. Books, writing, black-market stuff. All the things we aren't supposed to have. Jesus Christ, you ought to now"
>
> (Atwood 2005: 167-168).

This signals that the élite who have created and structured the values and rules in Gilead, essentially are oblivious to what consequences this has created for the lower classes. The women are especially affected by this and they are subjugated to an extreme extent as they have no freedom, control over their bodies nor minds in order to solely function for the benefit of the ideological framework.

5.6 Conclusion

Gilead is as discussed throughout this chapter an extreme patriarchal oppressive society. Toril Moi states that:

> patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, on order precisely to make us believe that the chosen standards for 'femininity' are *natural*. Thus a woman who refuses to conform can be labelled both *unfeminine* and *unnatural*. It is in the patriarchal interest that these two terms (femininity and femaleness) stay thoroughly confused
>
> (Moi 1997: 209)

This tells us that the rigid social standards we see in *The Handmaid's Tale*, that apply to all women, is a patriarchal construction and therefore the Unwomen in this novel are the women who are unable to conform and therefore seen as unnatural and unfeminine. Moi continues and explains that "[p]atrirchy, in other words, wants us to believe that there is such a thing as an essence of femaleness, called femininity" (Moi 1997: 209). This essence is what Gilead tries to impose and those who cannot conform are discarded, by being killed or sent to the Colonies. This reveals to us the way that patriarchy can maintain this rigid structure, by placing rules that only apply to women and those who are essentially female and can still procreative. In order to enforce the patriarchal ideology the feminine women are stripped of bodily control and given as objects and property to the patriarchal structure.

The Handmaid's Tale has shown us a society in which the normally implicit rules that we have discussed in the depth in the previous chapters, have become authorised as laws. Gilead's goal is seemingly to repopulate and maintain the human race, however, it also reveals a reaction to the previous pre-Gilead structure. Where freedom was too widespread and seen as their downfall. Therefore, the goal of Gilead is in reality to strip society, and the people within, of their freedom in order to restructure and create a totalitarian society in which a limited élite have complete control over every aspects of society.

The Handmaid's Tale depicts a version of a possible extreme patriarchal outcome as a reaction to the previous society that had, in the words of Aunt Lydia, too much freedom. The ideology and frameworks of this society is of course and extreme version of a patriarchal structure, however, the rules and regulations that exist are all known to us, as they stand as

suggestion or implied rules we are taught throughout our lives. These rules are what we all live our lives by as we have seen in *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Lovely Bones* that if women do not follow these rules that will have dire consequences because then the structure in place allows for violence and rape.

By illuminating and discussing these rules in this manner, we become more aware of them, the absurdity of them. Yet, we are still at a point where they are to some extent needed. I do not mean that the length of a woman skirt or the heels of her shoes suggest anything about her person, however, some do believe this, and therefore there are still some who justify their actions because of other's personal choices. This means that some justifies the control over someone else's body because they have acted or dressed in a certain manner. A woman who is raped should not be subjected to questions of where she was, why she was alone, or what she was wearing, as this is irrelevant. We need to place the blame where it belongs, within the social structure, which has a corrupt focus on the victims of violence.

Eagleton makes another valid point when ideology is concerned, as he writes "[f]or if […] dominion fails to yield its victims sufficient gratification over an extended period of time, then it is certain that they will finally revolt against it" (Eagleton 2007: xxiii). This signals that even though an ideology is totalitarian, it can only maintain its domination as long as it provides sufficient gratification. Therefore, when the authorities no longer can provide a sense of fulfilment, revolution will spread like a cure through society and eventually lead to the ideology's downfall. This is exemplary to what is happening in this novel. We see several characters within this structure that oppose both the values and its design, and as we read the epilogue, we see that the Republic of Gilead no longer exists. Consequently, the epilogue tells us that the Republic has seen its end and we might safely assume that opposing forces and ideas has had some impact.

Offred has in the words of Madeleine Davies "finally broken her silence and in doing so […] produce subversive and even dangerous narrative confessions" (Davies 2006: 64). The cassette tapes have been found and transcribed and, hence, in the epilogue we are given another narrator, namely Professor James Darcy Pieixoto, who has studied these tapes. He is the keynote speaker at a symposium on Gileadean studies and the title of his talk is "Problems of Authentication in Reference to *The Handmaid's Tale*" (Atwood 2005: 312). This talk essentially discredits Offred's story, and Pieixoto says that "[t]his item – I hesitate to use the word *document*" (Atwood 2005: 313). He essentially informs us that he does not find this piece trustworthy. Pieixoto reveals that there are other, similar, audio tapes found around the country

and that some of them where forgeries, again, leading us to question the validity of the story (Atwood 2005: 312-313). Furthermore, Pieixoto is seemingly annoyed by the lack of knowledge and portrayal of political and structural information that Offred provides, and he says that:

> had she had a different turn of mind. She could have told us much about the workings of the Gileadean empire, had she had the instincts of a reporter or a spy. What would we not give, now, for even twenty pages or so of printout from Waterford's [the Commander] private computer!
>
> (Atwood 2005: 322)

This proves that Atwood emphasises that a woman's voice and her story is still not valued as important or reliable information, especially not compared to the kind of information Pieixoto pictures he can obtain from the Commander's computer. Nonetheless, Offred has, in the words of Kelly Ives as she discuss Helene Cixous idea that, "[i]n making art, then, one writes one's body, one's existence" and Ives cites Cixous which says: "[w]rite your self. Your body must be heard" (qtd in Ives 2013: 83). This correlates to what Offred essentially tries to do, as she has written her body and her mind into existence thereby freeing it and escaping from the constraints of the patriarchal ideology of Gilead. Although, neither Irigaray's notion of womanspeak nor Cixous écriture fèminine are, by Pieixoto, still not valued as a document or seen as a reliable source (cf. Tyson 2006:101-102). This echoes back to what we discussed in the chapter on *Little Red Riding Hood,* that Marina Warner says that there is an inherent patriarchal tradition to view female tales as "old wives' tales" which in turn are viewed as "a piece of nonsense" (Warner 1995: 19). This way to disregard Offred's story as an old wives' tale seems to be Pieixoto's intent and what he tries to do in the epilogue, which emphasises what has been tradition to do to female storytellers according to Warner.

Furthermore, the epilogue tells us that Offred's narrative has in fact been, at least to some extent, altered. Like Sharon Rose Wilson explains that the "epilogue tells us that Offred's tale of doubtful authorship is oral, supposedly tape-recorded, transcribed, reconstructed, arranged and altered like folktales" (Wilson 1993: 271-272). This, again, emphasises the doubt and questions the validity of the narrator, but it places the narrative in a long tradition of female storytellers, which links us back to traditional oral fairy tales.

This evokes Serena's depiction of the garden is metaphorically saying something:

> [t]here is something subversive about this garden of Serena's, a sense of buried things bursting upwards, wordlessly, into the light, as if to point, to say: Whatever is silenced will clamour to be heard, though silently
>
> (Atwood 2005: 161)

This echoes back to the buried tapes of Offred's story. The narrative Offred provides is not what Pieixoto would like it to have been, however, it has waited, underground, for 200 years to enter into the light and be heard, and has finally fulfilled its purpose, though altered it is still heard, though silently.

Chapter 6: Conclusion.

> Because I'm a recovering patriarchal woman, I am also very aware of the ways in which patriarchal gender roles are destructive for men as well as for women […] traditional gender roles dictate that men are supposed to be strong (physically stoic and emotionally stoic), they are not supposed to cry because crying is considered a sign of weakness […] Expressing sympathy (or any loving feeling) for other men is especially taboo because patriarchy assumes that only the most mute and stoic […] forms of male bonding are free of homosexual overtones. In addition, men are not permitted to fail at anything they try because failure in any dominion implies failure in one's manhood
>
> (Tyson 2006: 87)

Throughout this thesis, we have investigated how patriarchal ideology has placed rigid stereotypes on both sexes. Men and women are viewed as having an inherent essence, linked to their sex, which in turn blurs the boundaries between sex and gender as patriarchy defines all male as masculine and all female as feminine. We could argue that these stereotypes are, in the words of Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément and their ideas of binary thought, more restrictive towards women than they are to men, because women are viewed as the inferior and passive side of every binary. Cixous concludes that women have been, and are defined by:

> the side that patriarchy considers inferior […] while it is assumed that the male is defined by the left side of each opposition, the side that patriarchy consider superior
>
> (Tyson 2006: 100)

Furthermore, the implicit social rules that we have drawn from the texts that enforce the patriarchal binaries, enforce notions of proper and improper behaviour. This signals that they primarily state regulations of what is deemed appropriate for men and for women and that what is appropriate for one sex, is not necessarily applicable to the other. These stereotypical rules, conditioned to the notions of essentialism, have been in place for as long as a patriarchal structure has been the governing ideology, as we have seen examples of in *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Lovely Bones* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. This is because patriarchal hierarchy is based on Cixous' and Clément's polar oppositions, which reveals a rigid hierarchal ideology

where every human being is placed in polar oppositions, man/woman and active/passive (cf. Cixous and Clément 2008: 64).

Recently the implicit patriarchal rules have taken on a new guise. The rules still implicitly exist and they have become a natural part of society and consequently internalised. We are introduced to them through the same mediums as we have discussed in this thesis, which is through fairy tales, novels and also films. In our present day, however, they additionally circulate the internet where they have taken on a new form and have been shaped into lists of what not to do in order to avoid rape. These tips mirror and emphasise the rules that women know well but nonetheless are rarely seen so bluntly stated, as to be compiled in a list such as this:

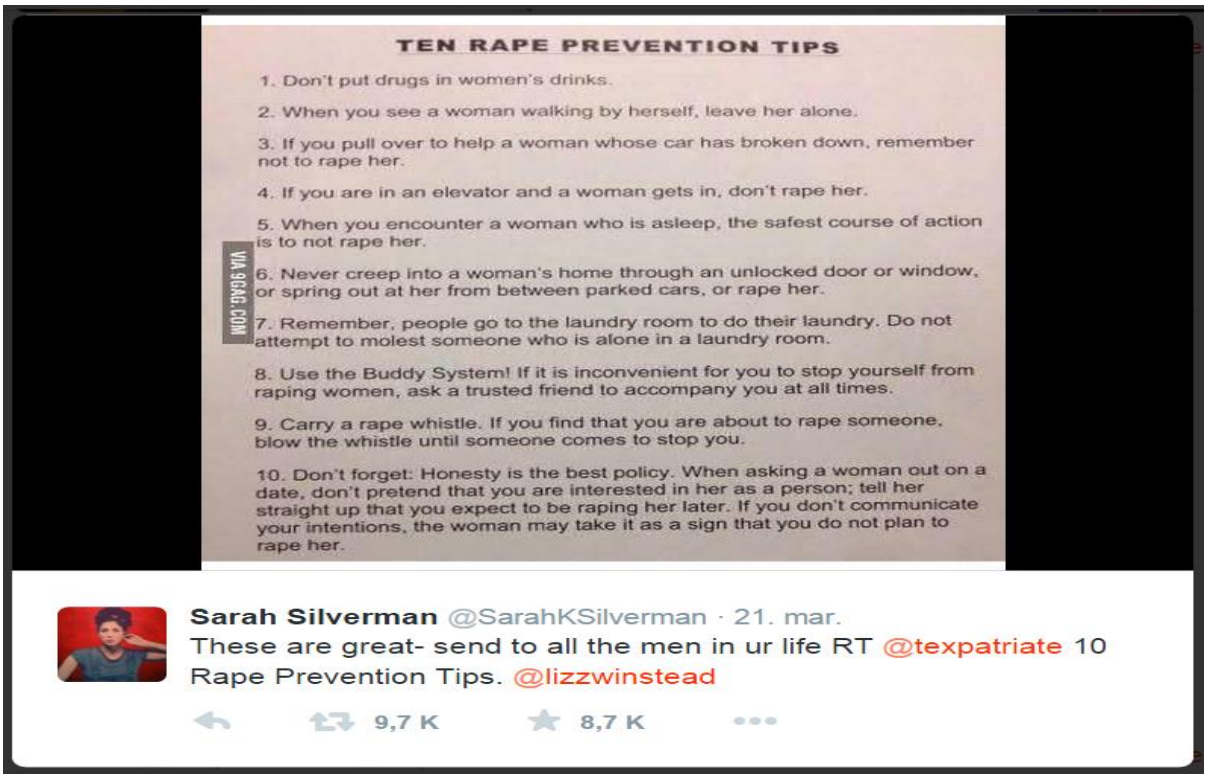
1. Women should always be aware of what's happening around them. Whether a woman is walking to work, walking through a parking lot, or just exercising in her neighborhood, awareness is the best defense against personal safety threats.
2. Always make eye contact. Women can tend to be intimidated by unfamiliar people, and instead of making eye contact, will look down. One of the ways to scare off a potential attacker is to give them reason to believe they could be identified, by maintaining eye contact.
3. Consider carrying a personal alarm, which is essentially a wireless alarm system that is small enough to be carried in a purse, or in the palm of a woman's hand. A personal alarm can often be activated with the touch of one button, and can be used to draw attention to a dangerous situation, or scare off an attacker.
4. Never open the door for strangers, regardless of whether they claim to be a service person, police officer or any other professional. Women should always verify identity, and not be afraid to appear rude by refusing to open the door.
5. Women should be aware of what they're putting on social media. Many predators use social media to gain insight into the lives of potential victims—including where they'll be and when, when they'll be home alone, and what routines they might have. Never put this type of information on any social media account.
6. Choose the elevator over the stairs. While women are often told time and time again that it's healthier to "take the stairs," in actuality, many predators hide in stairwells, and it's safer for women to choose the elevator. If a woman is in an elevator and she feels uncomfortable with someone who gets on, she should immediately leave.
7. Women should frequently change their routines. This could be outdoor exercise routines, work parking places, or even something like grabbing food at lunch. Routines and patterns make it easier for predators to target women.

(Trusper 2015)

These kind of lists are fairly common and circulate the internet, along with products designed to help women in situations where they might be attacked, such as whistles or alarms and nail polish that can detect date-rape drugs in drinks. What these lists and products convey, is that it is a woman's job to prevent rape. We have become accustomed to the fact that rape happens and society stands helpless to prevent this from happening, therefore, to take preventative measures have been left up to women, or potential rape victim. Nonetheless, these rules

essentially deprives women of their freedom and again dictates right and wrong behaviour, and they promote that rape is a possible outcome if these rules are not followed. In addition, it focuses and emphasises fear and anxiety and instructs women to be distrustful and constantly on guard, which is the same as we have seen in cautionary tales.

Such rape prevention lists are also under scrutiny at present because of the focus on blame, which is placed on the victim and not the culprit. American comedian Sarah Silverman retweeted a picture, as seen below, with "Ten Rape Prevention Tips" that has shifted the focus away from the victims and aimed at offender. This list is not new as it was first shared on the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence's blog back in 2011 (Cliff 2015).



(Silverman 2015)

Even though this list is four years old, it is because of Silverman's high profile, that this sparked the picture to go viral on twitter, and has at present been retweeted over 9000 times. This signals that many see the need for the discussion urged on by this list, that is, that there is in our society a culture that blames victims of rape instead of the rapists, which this list has overturned.

The list in itself provokes strong reactions, with many comments and reactions to that the list is offensive towards men. Nevertheless, if we look closely at the list it does in fact never mention men, as it addresses "you" the rapist. It is within the caption that Silverman wrote that accompanied the picture that states "[t]hese are great- send to all the men in ur life", which for

the first time direct the list towards men. The list in accompany with the Silverman's caption were not well received in social media. Many took it to mean that Silverman linked all men to be potential rapists, and argued that Silverman is a sexist and that the list, along with the comment was offensive (cf. Cliff 2015). Nonetheless, we could argue that to use comedy and irony to achieve some kind of reaction, in order to emphasise that both of these lists are in essence the same, and places either all women or all men as victims or rapists, have been successful.

Nonetheless, it is undeniable that list, aimed at rapists, have created a debate about these types of implicit social rules that we have discussed throughout this thesis. The list Sarah Silverman posted can be viewed with humour and irony and consequently could argue that it does not imply that all men are rapists or that all men supress a secret urge to rape women, but it emphasises that patriarchy has a distorted view on rape and who is to blame. The list in itself ridicules the notion that rape prevention tips are necessary. The list is essentially the implicit rules that have here become explicit and they state what both men and women are expected to know and follow.

These rules portray the same purpose as cautionary tales as they try to teach that there are essential male/masculine and the female/feminine characteristics that all men and women must conform to. Toril Moi argues that "[p]atriarchy has developed a whole series of feminine characteristics (sweetness, modesty, subservience, humility, etc.)" (Moi 1997: 210). I would further argue that patriarchy has equally developed a series of masculine characteristics such as strong, emotionless, authoritative and brave, which also stereotypes and binds men within the patriarchal ideology, which signals that patriarchy does not comply with the diversity of neither men nor women. As Julia Kristeva says that "*the feminine* can't be defined because there as many definitions of *the feminine* as there are women" (Tyson 2006: 103). This also applies to men, as we could argue that *the masculine* cannot be defined because there are as many definitions of *the masculine* as there are men.

This thesis have mostly been viewed from a feminist perspective, however, not with the intent of solely focus on the female sex and gender. Caitlin Moran notes that "[a] male feminist is one of the most glorious end-products of evolution" (Moran 2012: 72). This signals that to be a feminist should not solely be associated with women, as it has a tendency to do. One reason for this we might argue is that there is a stigma attached to the word, which emphasises not only that men should, or cannot be feminist because many view feminists as man-haters.

Caitlin Moran argues against this notion of feminism solely applying to women. She believes that everyone, male and female, should stand up on a chair and shout "I AM A FEMINIST!" (Moran 2012:72). This is one way to reclaim the word and use it somewhat humorously, as Sarah Silverman also aims to do, in order to not further the stigma and negative connotations that accompanies the term feminism. It is important to remember what Toril Moi says, that the words feminism and feminist refer to political movements that oppose sexism and patriarchy (cf. Moi 1997: 204). But these terms are in no way exclusive to women. Nonetheless, we could argue that the word feminism, from "Latin *femina*, 'woman'", is misconstrued because it originates from the word woman, which in turn functions to exclude men from this category. (OALD 2015). Moran states that the word feminism must be reclaimed (cf. Moran 2012:81). We must use it for our purpose and it must no longer be allowed to be used as a derogatory term used against those who identify with the word feminism. Moran says that "[w]omen's reluctance to use it sends out a really bad signal" (Moran 2012: 81). This reveals that the word is associated with something shameful, and that some do not want to be associated with the word because of this, and that is why humour becomes an important aspect to reclaim the word, feminism. To use humour, as Silverman and Moran does, signals that feminists are not angry man hating women, who do not wear bras, use makeup, or walk in high heels. Feminist are ordinary women who believe and advocate women's rights.

Furthermore, Moran agrees with Toril Moi, and states that feminism is a political movement (cf. Moran 2012: 85). Moran further emphasises the negative connotations feminism are linked to and states that feminism have been:

> blamed for the following: eating disorders, female depression, rising divorce rates, childhood obesity, male depression, women leaving it too late to conceive, the rise in abortion, female binge-drinking and rise in female crime. But these are all things which have simply INVOLVED WOMEN, and have nothing to do with the political movement 'feminism'
>
> (Moran 2012: 85)

This signals that feminism is blamed for many problems that modern society have encountered, but has nothing to do with feminism. This is why it is important to reclaim the word for what it is, a political movement advocating equal rights, and we need to be unanimous in what the word means and not use it as a scapegoat for other problems.

We have discussed throughout this thesis how patriarchal ideology with its fundamental hierarchal structure is a disease within society. I do not presume to hold the answer or cure to this disease, however, through humour and irony used in order to expose the patriarchal structure, is one way to uncover the sexism and hierarchal binaries within. Furthermore, to take back the word feminism, to be able to say proudly, without being sarcastic, and more importantly, that both sexes can say it without being ridiculed, is in the words of Moran "the vaccine" (Moran 2012: 77).

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